Al-Mīzān

An Exegesis of the Qurʾan

ʿAllāmah al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī

Translated by: Tawus Raja

Volume 14 (Chapter 6, verses 84-165)
Second Edition (2021)

Tawheed Institute Australia Ltd.
Sydney, Australia
www.tawheed.com.au

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English translation
Second Edition 1442/2021

Translated from the original Arabic titled: al-Mīzān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān as published by Muʾassasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī al-Ṭābʿiah li-Jamāʿat al-Mudarrisīn fī al-Ḥawzah al-ʿIlmiyyah fī Qumm al-Muqaddasah, 1417 AH [vol. 7].

Published by Tawheed Institute Australia Ltd.
Sydney, Australia
www.tawheed.com.au

In the Name of Allah,
the Beneficent, the Merciful.

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds;
the Beneficent, the Merciful;
the Master of the Day of Judgment;
Thee only we serve, and to Thee alone we beseech
for help;
Guide us in the straight path;
The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed
favors,not of those against whom Thou art
wrathful, nor of those who are astray.

O' Allah! send Your blessings to the head of
Your messengers and the last of
Your prophets,
Muḥammad and his pure and cleansed progeny.
Also send Your blessings to all Your
prophets and envoys.

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Arabic Transliteration Key

Arabic Letters	Transliteration	Arabic Letters	Transliteration
ا	ā	ع	ʿ
ب	b	غ	gh
ت	t	ف	f
ث	th	ق	q
ج	j	ك	k
ح	ḥ	ل	l
خ	kh	م	m
د	d	ن	m
ذ	dh	ه	h
ر	r	و	w/ū
ز	z	ى	y/ī
س	s	ء	ʾ
ش	sh	ة	-
ص	ṣ	ـَ	a
ض	ḍ	ـَ	i
ط	ṭ	ـُ	u
ظ	ẓ		

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Publisher's Note

In an effort to make the text more accessible to English-speaking readers, the editors have chosen to use English names for the prophets and figures (as listed below but not limited to) and to use Anglicized terms that now appear in English dictionaries.

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Ādam	Adam	Mūsā	Moses
David	Dawūd	Sulaymān	Solomon
Hārūn	Aaron	Shuʿayb	Jethro
Ibrāhīm	Abraham	Yaʿqūb	Jacob
ʿĪsā	Jesus	ʾAyyūb	Job
Isḥāq	Isaac	Yūshaʿ	Joshua
Ismāʿīl	Ishmael	Yūsūf	Joseph
Jibrāʾīl	Gabriel	Zakariyyā	Zachariah
Maryam	Mary	ʿUzayr	Ezra

Arabic terms and names have been transliterated according to the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (*IJMES*).

For ease of reading, glyphs and traditional honorifics such as "peace be upon him" or (s.a.w.) which are commonly used as a gesture of respect after the name of the Prophet Muhammad, the Imams, or other sacred figures have been omitted from this text. No disrespect is intended, and may God's peace and blessings be upon them all!

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Foreword

This volume was previously published by our institute in September of 2016. This is the second edition and reprint incorporating some minor corrections and formatting.

English volume 14 covers the exposition of verses 84-165 and completes the *tafsīr* of Sūrah al-Anʿām. The exposition of verses 1-83 was covered in English volume 13, published by WOFIS.

Some of the significant discussions in the previous volume 13 and the current one are: animals and their social system and is based on the Qur'anic outlook; the subject of command—elucidating the point that it belongs exclusively to God; the meaning and reality of the Divine Act and Command; the story of Abraham with an account of his personality is discussed in six chapters covering the Qur'anic, scientific and historical views. Subsequently, six other subjects are discussed in the following order: the meaning of the Book, Command and blessings in the Qur'an; a daughter and her children are also considered to be descendants and heirs in Islam; the phenomenon of creation and its applicability to all beings; and the Divine Guidance.

We are confident that the readers will benefit abundantly from the exposition of Ch. 6 and the discussions therein.

Tawheed Institute Australia Ltd
Committee of Translation and Publication
January 2021

About the Translator

Tawus Raja is an independent translator who has studied Qurʾanic exegesis and Islamic philosophy not through formal university or seminary education. His other works include Shining Sun: In Memory of ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī (London: ICAS Press, 2011), Divine Flashes of Husayn (Chicago: Great Books of the Islamic World, 2011) by Ayatullah Husayni Tihrani, and Treatise on Spiritual Journeying and Wayfaring (Chicago: Great Books of the Islamic World, 2013) by ʿAllāmah Bahr al-Ulum.

About the Author

The late Islamic scholar, thinker, and philosopher, ʿAllāmah al-SayyidMuḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī came from the celebrated Ṭabāṭabāʾī family of Tabriz. For the last three centuries, this family has produced generation after generation of renowned religious scholars in Azerbaijan (Iran). They are descendants of the second Imam, al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī (peace be on both of them). The clan is also referred to with the title, al-Qāḍī.

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī was the son of al-Sayyid Muḥammad b. al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī. ʿAllāmah was born in Tabriz on 29 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 1321/17 March 1904. His father died in 1330 (1912). The orphaned child grew up in Tabriz, and after completing his religious education there, around 1341 (1923), he went to Najaf (Iraq), the most important center of Shia religious learning.

In Najaf, he began his higher studies with such illustrious scholars as Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn Nāʾīnī al-Gharawī (1277–1355/1860 or 1861–1936), the son of Shaykh al-Islām ʿAbd al-Raḥīm, and Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Gharawī al-Iṣfahānī (1296–1361/1878–1942), the son of al-Ḥājj Muḥammad Ḥasan, Muʿīn al-Tujjār.

These two were among the most prominent scholars in the Shia world. They were among the most prominent scholars not only in the fields of Shia jurisprudence and principles of jurisprudence, but in all Islamic subjects. Their opinions and theories are still followed today. Each founded his own school of thought and trained thousands of Shia scholars and jurists; and all the *marājiʿ al-taqlīd*[1] of the Shia world, to this day, are their students. Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Gharawī al-Iṣfahānī was a philosopher, unsurpassed in his time; a man of literature; and a poet in Arabic and Persian; he was a genius whose achievements made others look up to him as their ideal. Shaykh Nāʾīnī, with his bold opinions and decrees in the political and social life of the Muslim *umma*, has carved for himself a niche in history.

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī was much influenced by these two teachers,

1 The highest authorities of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) whose rulings are followed by others.

particularly by al-Iṣfahānī, in the development of his thought and knowledge. A third influence was that of al-Sayyid Abū al-Qāsim Jaʿfar Khwānsārī (1313–80/1895 or 1896–1961), the son of al-Sayyid Muḥammad al-Mūsāwī, known as "the mathematician." ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī was proud to have studied mathematics with him, and also wrote a book on higher mathematics, in which he applied some special theories of his teacher.

ʿAllāmah studied philosophy and metaphysics from al-Sayyid Ḥusayn al-Ḥusaynī Bādkūbahʾī; the latter was a student of al-Sayyid Riḍā, who studied with al-Sayyid Mūsā, a well-known teacher of philosophy and related subjects. In the fields of ethics and spirituality, ʿAllāmah received his training from his relatives, al-Sayyid ʿAlī al-Qāḍī (1285–1366/1869–1947), a well-known scholar who established a school of spiritual and ethical training which still flourishes today.

All these influences combined to create in ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī a well-balanced academic and spiritual personality. He was a well-respected authority on religious subjects of jurisprudence and its fundamentals; a philosopher of independent views and new theories; and an inspired model of ethical and spiritual perfection. He not only taught morality, but also lived it. Yet it is also correct to state that his scholarship was overshadowed by his fame and prestige as a philosopher and a spiritual man.

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī returned to Tabriz in 1353/1934, where he was welcomed as a religious scholar. There he spent his time teaching higher philosophy to willing disciples—but it was a small place for his talents. In 1364/1945 he migrated to Qum, the most important center of religious education in Iran. In Qum, he remained engaged in imparting the knowledge of ethics, philosophy, and the exegesis of the Qurʾan to those students who had already attained a high level of erudition. There he remained until his death on Sunday, 18 Muḥarram 1402/15 November 1981. May God bestow His mercy on him. Amen.

Many religious leaders of the present generation were and are among his students and disciples, the most famous being the late Murtaḍā Muṭahharī (1338–99/1920–79).

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī's fame rests on his academic works—the most important being his great exegesis of the Qurʾan, *al-Mīzān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān.* It is said to be the foundation stone of the academic prestige which ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī was accorded in the Muslim world.

Among his other works is *Uṣūl-i falsafah va ravish-i riʾalism* [Practical

and Philosophical Principles of Realism]. This book is a comparative study of Islamic philosophy and various modern anti-Islamic schools of thoughts, especially Marxism. His disciple, the late Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, annotated this work, thus making it easily accessible to the average man.

A third book, *Shiʿa dār Islām*, was first published in Persian; later it was published in English with the title, *Shiʾite Islam*. The ʿAllāmah wrote this book on the request of Professor Kenneth Morgan of Colgate University, to introduce Shiism to the West.

However, it is his *tafsīr, al-Mīzān* (published in 20 volumes in Arabic) which presents the true picture of the author's academic style and his way of thinking. In the preface to volume 1, the author outlines his plan, to explain the Qurʾan with the help of the Qurʾan itself. This he faithfully does, all the way through to the end of the *tafsīr*.

Acknowledgements

The translator is greatly indebted to Dr. Amina Inloes who reviewed the entire manuscript and provided us with her comments and corrections. He also wishes to thank other editors who read, commented and proofread the work.

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Chapter 6

al-Anʿām (The Cattle)

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Verses 84-90

وَ وَهَبْنا لَهُ إِسْحاقَ وَ يَعْقُوبَ كُلاًّ هَدَيْنا وَ نُوحاً هَدَيْنا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِ داوُدَ
وَ سُلَيْمانَ وَ أَيُّوبَ وَ يُوسُفَ وَ مُوسى وَ هارُونَ وَ كَذلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٨٤﴾
وَ زَكَرِيَّا وَ يَحْيى وَ عِيسى وَ إِلْياسَ كُلٌّ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٨٥﴾ وَ إِسْماعِيلَ وَ الْيَسَعَ
وَ يُونُسَ وَ لُوطاً وَ كلاًّ فَضَّلْنا عَلَى الْعالَمِينَ ﴿٨٦﴾ وَ مِنْ آبائِهِمْ وَ ذُرِّيَّاتِهِمْ وَ
إِخْوانِهِمْ وَ اجْتَبَيْناهُمْ وَ هَدَيْناهُمْ إِلى صِراطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٨٧﴾ ذلِكَ هُدَى اللَّهِ
يَهْدِي بِهِ مَنْ يَشاءُ مِنْ عِبادِهِ وَ لَوْ أَشْرَكُوا لَحَبِطَ عَنْهُمْ ما كانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾
أُولئِكَ الَّذِينَ آتَيْناهُمُ الْكِتابَ وَ الْحُكْمَ وَ النُّبُوَّةَ فَإِنْ يَكْفُرْ بِها هؤُلاءِ فَقَدْ
وَكَّلْنا بِها قَوْماً لَيْسُوا بِها بِكافِرِينَ ﴿٨٩﴾ أُولئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ فَبِهُداهُمُ اقْتَدِهْ
قُلْ لا أَسْئَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْراً إِنْ هُوَ إِلاَّ ذِكْرى لِلْعالَمِينَ ﴿٩٠﴾

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate

(6:84) *And We gave to him Isaac and Jacob; each did We guide, and Noah did We guide before, and of his descendants, David and Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses and Aaron; and thus do We reward the good-doers.*

(6:85) *And Zachariah, John, Jesus and Elias; every one was of the righteous;*

(6:86) *And Ishmael, Elisha, Jonah and Lot; and every one, We preferred them above the nations:*

(6:87) *And from among their fathers and their descendants and their brethren, and We chose them and guided them to a straight path.*

(6:88) *This is Allah's guidance, He guides thereby whom He wills of His servants; and if they had associated others (with Him), certainly*

what they did would have become ineffectual for them.

(6:89) *Those are they to whom We gave the book and the judgment and the prophethood; therefore if these disbelieve in it We have already entrusted with it a people who are not disbelievers in it.*

(6:90) *These are they whom Allah guided, therefore follow their guidance. Say: I do not ask you for any reward for it; it is nothing but a reminder to the nations.*

Introduction

The connection between these verses and the previous verses is clear and without need of explanation, because here Abraham's story continues. These verses describe some of God's favors upon him and upon some other prophets who are named with him, as He says: *And We gave to him Isaac and Jacob* (6:84); *And thus do We reward the good-doers* (6:84); *And every one We preferred them above the nations* (6:86), and other verses. However, unlike what some exegetes have said, this is not the only purpose of these verses. Rather, these favors are mentioned as the great blessings and pleasant graces that ensue from accepting God's guidance and following the innate monotheism which is embedded in human nature. This complies better with the theme of the entire chapter, which is to clarify *tawḥīd* (monotheism, God's oneness) in a way that it conforms to the innate human nature and disposition (*fiṭrah*). As we said, Abraham's story here is mentioned as an example of the general principles discussed in the previous part of the chapter.

In addition to explaining monotheism, these verses also indicate that God has always preserved monotheism among people through a continuous chain, with links that were connected by God's guidance. Thus God has prevented humankind's divine innate nature from failing to actualize altogether due to satanic desires. Otherwise, the entire creation would be purposeless and pointless. God alludes to this [continuation] by expressions such as: *And We gave to him…*. (6:84); *And Noah did We guide before, and of his descendants* (6:84); *And from among their fathers and their descendants and their brethren* (6:87 *therefore if these disbelieve in it…* (6:89). These verses also outline the distinguishing points between divine guidance and other ways, including:

(1) Being chosen [by God];

(2) Having a straight path;

(3) Being given a book;
(4) Being given judgment; and
(5) Being given prophethood.
We shall discuss these below, by God's will.

Commentary

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وَ وَهَبْنا لَهُ إِسْحاقَ وَ يَعْقُوبَ كُلاًّ هَدَيْنا وَ نُوحاً هَدَيْنا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِ داوُدَ وَ سُلَيْمانَ وَ أَيُّوبَ وَ يُوسُفَ وَ مُوسى وَ هارُونَ وَ كَذلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٨٤﴾

(6:84) And We gave to him Isaac and Jacob; each* (kullan) *did We guide, and Noah did We guide before, and of his descendants, David and Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses and Aaron; and thus do We reward the good-doers.

Isaac was Abraham's son, and Jacob was Isaac's son. Exegetes have explained that the word *kullan* (each, every, all) in *each did We guide* is mentioned at the beginning of the phrase in order to indicate that *each* of them received divine guidance independently, as opposed to *some* of them receiving it independently—like Abraham—and others receiving it through him. This is equivalent to saying: "We guided Abraham, We guided Isaac, and We guided Jacob."

… and Noah did We guide before…: This statement suggests that God's guidance has always existed through a continuous chain. It is not something that began with Abraham, but before him this mercy had embraced Noah.

… and of his descendants, David and Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses and Aaron; and thus do We reward the good-doers* (al-muḥsinīn, from iḥsān)*: As some exegetes have explained, the pronoun "his" in *his descendants* must refer to Noah because of two reasons: (1) that was the last name mentioned; and (2) some of the people listed below were not Abraham's descendants, such as Lot and Elias.

Others have said that the pronoun refers to Abraham, and Lot and Elias are mentioned alongside his descendants by generalization (*taghlīb*).[1] A similar verse [where the pronoun refers to Abraham] is: *And We granted*

1 *Taghlīb* is when a mixed group is entirely described by the quality of some of them, even though that quality does not apply to all of them. (Trans.)

him Isaac and Jacob, and caused the prophethood and the book to remain in his seed (29:27).

Another view is that the word "descendants" only includes the six prophets named in this verse [6:84], not the rest of the prophets mentioned in the next verses. The next two verses—*And Zachariah… And Ishmael…* (6:85-86)—do not add to "David," but they add to *and of his descendants*. However, this view does not match the context and flow of the verses.[1]

… and thus (kadhālika) do We reward the good-doers: Apparently the "reward" mentioned here is the above-mentioned divine guidance [where the verse says, *each did We guide, and Noah did We guide before*]. The word *kadhālika* is used to refer to something at a distance. Its usage here indicates the lofty status and magnificence of God's guidance. It is similar to its usage in the verse: *Thus* (kadhālika) *does Allah set forth parables* (13:17). The meaning is: "We reward the good-doers like this."

وَ زَكَرِيَّا وَ يَحْيى وَ عِيسى وَ إِلْياسَ كُلٌّ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٨٥﴾

***(6:85) And Zachariah, John, Jesus and Elias; every one was of the righteous* (al-ṣāliḥīn, from ṣalāḥ)**

We have already discussed the meaning of *iḥsān* (excellent, good-doing) and *ṣalāḥ* (righteousness).[2] The verse also names Jesus as one of the descendants of Noah even though his only connection is through his mother. This is a clear indication that the Noble Qur'an considers the children and descendants of one's daughter to be part of one's own children and descendants. A similar conclusion was made before from verses on inheritance and unlawful marriages.[3] We shall complete this discussion below under our examination of the narrations, by God's will.

وَ إِسْماعِيلَ وَ الْيَسَعَ وَ يُونُسَ وَ لُوطاً وَ كلاًّ فَضَّلْنا عَلَى الْعالَمِينَ ﴿٨٦﴾

---

1 The apparent meaning is that all of the names listed in these verses are "of his descendants." This means that the next two verses add to "David." If they add to "and of his descendants," then the meaning would be: "And We also guided Zachariah… and We also guided Ishmael…" (Trans.)

2 *Iḥsān* refers to the end of the last verse. The author has discussed *iḥsān* under verses 2:195, 3:134 and 5:93; and *ṣalāḥ* under verses 2:130, 4:69 and 6:74. (Trans.)

3 These are verses 4:7, 4:11 and 4:23-24. The author has quoted and discussed them at the end of his discussion of the current set of verses. (Trans.)

(6:86) And Ishmael, Elisha* (al-Yasaʿ)*, Jonah and Lot; and every one, We preferred them above the nations.

Apparently, "Ishmael" here refers to Abraham's son and Isaac's brother. Al-Yasaʿ is also pronounced as Al-Laysaʿ. He was apparently an Israelite prophet whom God has named next to Ishmael, as in the verse: *And remember Ishmael and Elisha and Dhū al-Kifl; and they were all of the good* (38:48). However, the Qur'an does not discuss his story.

… and every one We preferred them above the nations* (al-ʿālamīn)*: *ʿĀlam* is a group of people such as the *ʿālam* of the Arabs, the *ʿālam* of the Persians, and the *ʿālam* of the Romans [where *ʿālam* means "nation, world, community"]. Being preferred over the nations refers to their higher position compared to the people of their time in the sense that they were the first ones who *directly* received God's special guidance, as opposed to others who were blessed with guidance *through them*. One can also say that they have been preferred over people of all times, not just their contemporaries, in the sense that they were guided by the divine guidance embedded in the innate human nature without any intermediary. God's direct guidance is a blessing that is an advantage for those who receive it over those who do not. This blessing has embraced the group mentioned here—including the prophets and those related to them like their fathers, descendants, and brethren. Thus this group is preferred above everyone else by God's preference.

Overall, the criterion of this preference is benefiting from God's direct guidance without any intermediary. The prophets are preferred over others because this applies to them. Now, if one can conceive of others who are also subject to this guidance—such as the angels, as one can infer from God's words; and such as the Imams, as we mentioned under the verse: *And when his Lord tried Abraham with certain words* (2:124)—then the prophets would not be preferred above them in this aspect, although they could be preferred over them in aspects other than guidance. Given the above explanation, one cannot draw on this verse—as some exegetes have done—to show that the prophets are superior to the angels.

It should also be clear that their preference is only because of the special divine guidance which embraced them without any intermediary. The preference mentioned in this verse is not based on their other qualities such as being chosen, being on the straight path, and having been given scripture, judgment and prophethood.

You should know that the seventeen prophets named in these three verses [6:84-86] are mentioned neither in chronological order, as is obvious, nor according to their rank. Noah, Moses and Jesus are mentioned in the midst of them, even though they were superior to the rest of them according to the explicit text of the Qur'an, as we explained in our discussion on prophethood under verse 2:213.[1]

Here is a summary of the explanation offered by the author of *al-Manār* about the order of the fourteen[2] prophets named in these verses:

> These prophets are grouped into three categories based on a commonality between them. The first group includes David, Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses and Aaron. The common quality between them is that in addition to being prophets and messengers, God made them kings, rulers, judges, and leaders in the community. The verse first names David and Solomon, who were kings with wealth and affluence. Then it mentions Job and Joseph, where Job was a great, rich and benevolent ruler, and Joseph was a great vizier with authority. Both of them were tested by difficulty, where they showed patience; and they were also tested by ease, where they showed gratitude. The verse then names Moses and Aaron who were rulers among their people but were not kings.
>
> Each of these three pairs shared a distinct quality. Their order is based on their enjoyment of worldly bounties, for David and Solomon were more materially endowed than Job and Joseph, who were in turn more materially endowed than Moses and Aaron. It could also be that the pairs escalate in terms of religious value, because apparently Moses and Aaron were superior to Job and Joseph, who were in turn superior to David and Solomon because of incorporating both patience in difficulty and gratefulness in ease.
>
> The second group includes Zachariah, John, Jesus and Elias. Their distinct quality was their high degree of *zuhd* (disinterestedness, aversion, renunciation) with regards to the pleasures and adornments this world (*dunyā*). That is why the verse describes them as

1 See volume 3 of the English translation, pp. 183ff. (Trans.)

2 Fourteen is if we start the count from David, excluding Isaac, Jacob and Noah. (Trans.)

> "the righteous" (*al-ṣāliḥīn*), for this quality fits them more when they are compared to others, even though all prophets were righteous and good-doers in the absolute sense.
>
> The third group includes Ishmael, Elisha, Jonah and Lot. They are mentioned last because there is no unique quality that was common among them. They neither had kingdom and dominion in this world, as in the case of the first group, nor an intense degree of aversion to this world, as in the case of the third group.

Al-Rāzī has a similar explanation in his *Tafsīr*, although *al-Manār*'s explanation is more plausible. The problem with both explanations, however, is that they consider the third group to be devoid of any distinct quality. This is not true. As with Ishmael, God tested him with the trial of being slaughtered, and he was patient with God's trial. God says: *So We gave him [Abraham] the good news of a boy, possessing forbearance. And when he attained [the age of] working with him, he said: O my son! Surely I have seen in a dream that I should sacrifice you; consider then what you see. He said: O my father! Do what you are commanded; you will find me, if Allah wills, of the patient ones* (37:101-102). This is an exalted characteristic by which God distinguished Ishmael, and a clear tribulation by which he stands out, to the extent that God has made sacrifice as a universal requirement in hajj in order to remind everyone of the ordeal that Ishmael endured in God's way. This is how God made his remembrance last among the posterity. Moreover, he was the partner of his noble father in building the Kaʿbah, which is itself a sufficient distinction.

As with Prophet Jonah, God tested him with a trial that He did not mete out to any other prophet. Jonah was swallowed by the fish, wherein *he called out in the darkness: There is no god but Thou, glory be to Thee; surely I was among the wrongdoers* (21:87).

As with Lot, the unique tribulations that he faced in God's way are also mentioned in the Noble Qur'an. He faced the first difficulties of his life alongside Abraham, until when they migrated from their people and homeland. Then God sent him to the people of Sodom and its vicinity, who used to commit an indecency which was completely unprecedented in the world.[1] They persisted with their evil practice until they were taken by God's exterminating punishment. At that point, there was only one

1 See verses 7:80 and 29:28. (Trans.)

household that had submitted to God,[1] and that was Lot's household, with the exception of his wife.

As with Elisha (al-Yasaʿ), none of his story appears in the Qur'an. According to some narrations, he was the successor of Ilyās (Elias, Elijah).[2] He went to his people with miracles similar to those of Jesus son of Mary, such as bringing the dead to life, and healing the blind and the epileptic. God tested his people with a massive famine and drought.

Hence, it is better to correct the above explanation about the order of the prophets who are named in these verses as follows.

The first group—which includes six prophets—consists of those who had kingdom and rule on top of messengership. The next four prophets are distinct for their disinterestedness from this world and their aversion to its adornments. The third group—which includes four prophets—consists of prophets with various distinction and great divine tests. Each of them were distinguished by a specific quality. And God knows best.

Another problem with the above explanation offered by the author of *al-Manār* is his point about the superiority of Moses and Aaron over Job and Joseph, and their superiority over David and Solomon. There is no evidence to support his view. The same applies to his interpretation of *ṣalāḥ* (righteousness) as *zuhd* (material disinterestedness and renunciation).

وَ مِنْ آبائِهِمْ وَ ذُرِّيَّاتِهِمْ وَ إِخْوانِهِمْ وَ اجْتَبَيْناهُمْ وَ هَدَيْناهُمْ إِلى صِراطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٨٧﴾

(6:87) And from among their fathers and their descendants and their brethren, and We chose them and guided them to a straight path.

This verse confirms what we said above: that the purpose of these verses is to indicate the continuity of the chain of divine guidance. This is because the verse adds these groups to the previously mentioned individuals as their fathers, children or brothers.

… and We chose them* (ijtabaynāhum, from ijtibāʾ) *and guided them to a straight path: Al-Rāghib says in *al-Mufradāt*:

> When one gathers and stores water in a pool he says: *jabaytu al-māʾ*. *Jābiyah* is the name of a pool where water gathers, and its

1 See verse 51:36. (Trans.)

2 See 1 Kings 19:16. (Trans.)

> plural is *jawāb*. God says: *and bowls (large) as watering-troughs* (kal-jawāb) (34:13). The verb *jabaytu* is used metaphorically when one collects taxes. Another similar usage is found in the verse: *to which fruits of every kind shall be drawn* (yujbá ilayhi) (28:57). *Ijtibāʾ* means "to gather by selection (*iṣṭifāʾ*)." God says [about Prophet Jonah]: *Then his Lord chose him* (ijtabāhu) (68:50)….
>
> God's *ijtibāʾ* (choosing, selection) is when He favors a servant with an exclusive divine grace which results in various bounties for the servant without any effort on his part. This applies to the prophets and others who are close to them, such as the truthful and the martyrs, as the Qur'an says [where Prophet Jacob tells his son Joesph]: *And thus will your Lord choose you* (yajtabīka) (12:6). Similarly, the Qur'an says: *Then his Lord chose him* (ijtabāhu), *and He made him of the righteous* (68:50); *And We chose them* (ijtabaynāhum) *and guided them to a straight path* (6:87); *Then his [Adam's] Lord chose him* (ijtabāhu), *so He turned to him and guided (him)* (20:122); *He chooses* (yajtabī) *for Himself whom He wills, and guides to Himself him who turns (to Him), frequently* (42:13).

Al-Rāghib's definition is consistent with the usage of *ijtibāʾ* in the Qur'an. However, this is not the original meaning of the term, but an implication and consequence of it, which pertains to God's treatment of His chosen servants. The theme of these verses suggests that what is intended here is the root meaning of the term, which is "to gather things from various places and dispersed positions." This would set the grounds for the next part of the verse, which talks about their guidance to the straight path. It is as if God is saying: "We gathered them despite their original dispersion. Then, when they all gathered and joined one another, We guided them all to such-and-such a path…."

This interpretation is according to the theme and purpose of these verses, which, as we discussed above, is to explain the continuity of the chain of those who have been guided by the divine guidance embedded in the innate human nature. To convey this meaning, it is most befitting to imagine them as gathered and united, such that divine mercy would embrace them as one unit, where they follow a single form of guidance, and that leads them to a single straight path which is free from any discrepancy whatsoever. They all follow the same path that is consistent in

terms of:

(a) Its time and circumstances;

(b) Its parts and components;

(c) Its callers and followers; and

(d) Its goal and destination.[1]

The path to which they are guided may differ in terms of wideness and narrowness of their apparent laws, but these laws differ only in terms of concision and elaboration, as per the capacity of different nations. Nonetheless, they are all unanimous over a single reality which is innately embedded in human nature: God's oneness and the necessity of serving Him alone. The whole human formation is designed by God in such a way that inherently points to monotheism. Clearly there is no transformation or alteration of the creation and formation of the human being in and of itself, such that it would change the principles of human cognition and voluntary motion. The senses in the outside, the emotions and feelings in the inside, and the center of decision making and judgment—which is the innate power of reason—ever follow a fixed and unchanging set of principles throughout all human beings, even though specific views and goals for humanity may eventually evolve since they pertain to the requirements of life in every age and time.

Humans always feel a need for food, drink, clothes, shelter and sex. They always crave things that give comfort to their covetous souls, and dislike what harms and hurts them. They constantly want a happy life, and are afraid of misery and an evil end. These inclinations are always present in humankind, even though the appearance of their life and activities may change from time to time and from one generation to another. God says: *Then set your face upright for the religion purely—the nature made by Allah in which He has made men; there is no altering of Allah's creation; that is the right religion, but most people do not know* (30:30). The pure divine religion that upholds human society is what the innate human nature calls to and what the human creation inclines toward. This innate calling and inclination is based on the existential needs of human nature. Our souls are inspired with the means of our felicity in terms of right beliefs and actions—that is, in terms of facts, ethics and rituals. This is something that never undergoes any change or replacement because it is based on a

1 The author has explained each of these below. (Trans.)

fixed nature and creation. Thus it should be clear that:

(a) The innate human nature's call to human felicity [that is, the innate religious call] is not limited to any specific time or circumstance.

(b) The innate religious call is also free from any discrepancy within its parts, meaning that no part of the pure religion opposes or contradicts another part of it, and there is nothing in it that necessitates an inner invalidation of it. This is because all parts of religion are nurtured from the same breast of monotheism (*tawḥīd*), and this gives religion the best balance. They are like our physical faculties and organs: if they come in conflict with one another or one part transgresses over another, then they will be checked and set in place by a supervising faculty that regulates each part according to its significance and impact in stabilizing human life.

(c) The divine innate religion does not differ from person to person. That is, those who are guided by this guidance follow the same course. None of these leaders calls the people to something different than another caller, even though their calls differ in terms of elaboration and concision, according to the evolution of human societies over time. God says: *Surely the (only) religion with Allah is Islam* (3:19); *He has made plain to you of the religion what He enjoined upon Noah, and that which We have revealed to you, and that which We enjoined upon Abraham, Moses and Jesus: that maintain the religion and be not divided therein* (42:13).

(d) This religion is also consistent and uniform in terms of its goal and objective, both of which lie in monotheism, which is the point of reference of all religious beliefs, moral values, and legal injunctions. God says: *Surely this is your nation, one nation (only), and I am your Lord; therefore serve Me* (21:92); *And We did not send before you any messenger but We revealed to him that there is no god but Me; therefore serve Me* (21:25).

The above should clarify the meaning of His words: *and We chose them and guided them to a straight path* (ṣirāṭan mustaqīman) (6:87). The word *ṣirāṭ* (path) is indefinite in terms of inflection, as opposed to its definite usage in other verses like: *Guide us to the straight path* (al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm). *The path of those upon whom Thou hast blessed* (1:6-7). The use of indefinite here directs the mind to the attribute of the path: straightness (*istiqāmah*). If something is straight, it means that it is uniform and consistent in terms of its qualities and specifications. This shows that they were guided to a path that was devoid of any discrepancy in any way and aspect. This can only make sense because it is about a path based on the

innate human nature, which is how the human being has been created and fashioned. This basic formation and creation of humankind does not change in terms of its guidance and direction toward the existential goals of the human species.

Those who are guided to this straight path are under God's security from the dangers of the journey and the slips of the way. This is because they are treading a way that does not vary in terms of guidance and misguidance, truth and falsehood, and felicity and wretchedness. Rather, its parts are all consistent and uniform at all times. It is a path that is founded on the truth and leads to the truth. It does not leave its follower in confusion, nor does it take the person to iniquity, disobedience and wretchedness. God says: *Those who believe and do not mix up their belief with iniquity, those are they who shall have the security and they are those who have found guidance* (6:82).

ذلِكَ هُدَى اللَّهِ يَهْدِى بِهِ مَنْ يَشاءُ مِنْ عِبادِهِ وَ لَوْ أَشْرَكُوا لَحَبِطَ عَنْهُمْ ما كانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾

(6:88) This is Allah's guidance, He guides thereby whom He wills of His servants; and if they had associated others (with Him), certainly what they did would have become ineffectual for them.

Here God defines His special guidance by which He guides whomever He wills among His servants. It was through this divine grace that He guided the above-mentioned prophets. True guidance is only that which comes from God. We can verify whether one is blessed with God's guidance if: (1) the person is on the path of other guided individuals, which are the noble prophets of God; and (2) the person's path is composed of a consistent set of components which all revolve around monotheism, promote the call of truth, and bear the mark of servitude and *taqwá* (Godwariness, self-restraint, piety).

On the other hand there are some paths that differentiate between God's messengers by accepting some and rejecting others, or differentiate between God's laws and orders by taking some and leaving out others. There are also paths that do not secure a felicitous life for human society, but result in unfavorable outcomes. God is by no means pleased with such paths, for they deviate from humankind's innate nature and makeup, to the pitfalls of misguidance and slippery footholds of desires. Being guided

by these paths is not God's guidance.

The Qur'an says: *Surely those who disbelieve in Allah and His messengers and (those who) desire to make a distinction between Allah and His messengers and say: We believe in some and disbelieve in others, and desire to take a course between (this and) that. These it is that are truly disbelievers, and We have prepared for the disbelievers a disgraceful chastisement* (4:150-151); *Do you then believe in a part of the Book and disbelieve in the other? What then is the re ward of such among you as do this but disgrace in the life of this world, and on the Day of Resurrection they shall be sent back to the most grievous chastisement* (2:85); *And who is more erring than he who follows his low desires without any guidance from Allah? Surely Allah does not guide the unjust people* (28:50). What is meant here is that a path which involves the following of desires is nothing but error and misguidance; it does not lead its traveler to a felicitous life. This is not God's guidance because it consists of injustice, while God has never decreed injustice, has not made it a means to happiness. One can by no means achieve happiness through wrongdoing.

In short, the special feature of God's guidance is that it is completely free from misguidance and does not lead to any form of error. It is sheer guidance that brings about sheer happiness as an unending gift. Meanwhile, God's bestowal is not like the gifts that are common among us, where the gift leaves the hand of the giver upon its conferment, and the ownership transfers to the receiver regardless of him being grateful or ungrateful. Rather, something continues to be God's gift only if the person adheres to monotheism and servitude. No one has any position with God and no one is secure from Him except by sheer servitude. That is why He continues to add: *and if they had associated others (with Him), certainly what they did would have become ineffectual for them* (6:88). He refers to this [ungratefulness and lack of servitude] as *shirk* (polytheism, association of others with God) because the purpose of the verses is to explain monotheism.

أُولٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ آتَيْناهُمُ الْكِتابَ وَ الْحُكْمَ وَ النُّبُوَّةَ فَإِنْ يَكْفُرْ بِها هؤُلاءِ فَقَدْ وَكَّلْنا بِها قَوْماً لَيْسُوا بِها بِكافِرِينَ ﴿٨٩﴾

(6:89) Those* (ulāʾika) *are they to whom We gave the book and the judgment* (al-ḥukm) *and the prophethood; therefore if these disbelieve in

it We have already entrusted with it a people who are not disbelievers in it.

The word *ulāʾika* (those) is a demonstrative pronoun that is used for things at a distance. This indicates the lofty status and exalted position of this group [of prophets and their relatives]. They were given the book, judgment and prophethood in the sense that they *as a whole* were given these things, not that every single one of them was given all of these. We already explained this in our exposition of the verse: *and We chose them and guided them* (6:87). In the case of "the book," it was given only to some of the prophets such as Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus.

When the Qur'an talks about "the book" of the prophets in a general sense [not any specific book], it means a scripture that consists of laws that are used to judge between the people in order to settle their disputes. We can see this meaning in the following verses: *(All) people are a single nation; so Allah raised prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and He revealed with them the Book with truth, that it might judge between people in that in which they differed* (2:213); *Surely We revealed the Torah in which was guidance and light; with it the prophets who submitted themselves (to Allah) judged (matters).… And We have revealed to you the Book with the truth, verifying what is before it of the Book and a guardian over it; therefore, judge between them by what Allah has revealed* (5:44-48).

Ḥukm (judgment, rule) is "to make an affirmative connection between the parts of speech." One example is when one states that "so-and-so is knowledgeable." In social affairs and practical matters, both a proposition and the type of relation that it conveys [between the two parts of the sentence] are called *ḥukm*. Some examples are: "One must do such-and-such an act"; "It is forbidden to do such-and-such"; "This act is permissible"; "I would like you to do so" and "I would dislike it if you did so." Therefore, each of the five imperative forms is a *ḥukm* (judgment, rule)—including *wujūb* (obligation), *ḥurmah* (prohibition, being forbidden), *jawāz* (permissibility, also called *ibāḥah*), *istiḥbāb* (being recommended, being approved) and *karāhah* (reprehensibility, being disapproved). Likewise, the statements which convey these rules are also called *aḥkām* (plural of *ḥukm*). There are also other rules (*aḥkām*) in societies that are based on other relations such as ownership, management, representation, guardianship, authority and so on.

Ḥukm is also used as an infinitive, meaning "to make and decree a judgment." This can take several forms:

(1) Legislation and enactment of a law, where a suitable law is set in place to govern the interactions of the people in order to preserve social order.

(2) Exercising personal opinion and issuing a verdict, such as the case of judges and rulers in disputes, where they decide who has the right or who the owner of a property is. Another example is the edicts and rulings issued by those who make legal rulings (sing. *fatwá*).

(3) Exercising rule over the people, where a ruler or king exercises authority over a territory that is under his rule or possession.

Since the verse mentions *ḥukm* alongside "the book," the term is apparently meant in the sense of judgment (*qaḍāʾ*). Hence, "being given the book and *ḥukm*" means that they were given legal rules and the position to judge based on them among the people. This meaning can be clearly seen in many other verses such as: *And He revealed with them the Book with truth, that it might judge between people in that in which they differed* (2:213); *Surely We revealed the Torah in which was guidance and light; with it the prophets who submitted themselves (to Allah) judged* (yaḥkumu) (5:44); *That you may judge* (li-taḥkuma) *between people by means of that which Allah has taught you* (4:105); *And David and Solomon when they were giving judgment* (yaḥkumāni) *concerning the field* (21:78); *O David! Surely We have made you a ruler in the land; so judge* (fa-uḥkum) *between men with justice and do not follow desire, lest it should lead you astray from the path of Allah* (38:26).

It could also be that *ḥukm* here has a more general and inclusive meaning [that is, including more than one of the above interpretations], as used in a verse where Abraham says: *My Lord: Grant me judgment* (ḥukman), *and join me with the righteous* (26:83).

We explained the meaning of "prophethood" (*nubuwwah*) in our exposition of the verse: *(All) people were a single nation; so Allah raised prophets* (2:213).[1] It is a position of receiving news from the unseen through a special divine grace. It pertains to realities that are beyond the visible and sensible world, such God's unity, the angels and the Last Day.

These three qualities by which God blessed the chain of prophets—that is, the book, judgment and prophethood—are mentioned in a thread of verses that serve to describe God's guidance. Therefore, it can be deduced

1 See volume 3 of the English translation, under verse 2:213. (Trans.)

that these are the *results* of God's guidance, and they serve to complete one's knowledge of God and His communications. It is as if the verses are saying: "The results of that guidance upon which We gathered all prophets and by which We preferred them above all nations were: (1) it led them to a straight path; (2) it made them learn "the book" which comprises of God's laws; (3) it established them and placed them in a position to judge among the people; and (4) it informed them of unseen realities.

Discussion on the Meaning of "Book" in the Qur'an

What comes to our minds nowadays when we hear the word "book" (*kitāb*) is a sheet or collection of sheets that convey certain meanings which have been printed or written on them.[1] However, the criterion in applying a term is the purpose which it serves, not the particular instance and application to which it was first assigned or which is commonly used today. The purpose of a book is to record certain meanings in a way that one can evoke them by referring to that book. This general definition is not limited to what the hand writes by pen on paper. For example, when one memorizes a book, what the person retains in his memory is also called a "book." Similarly, when one reads out the book that he has memorized, that is also called a "book," even though neither of them involves papers or tablets that have been inscribed by pen—as in the case of what we commonly call a "book."

It is this general and extended meaning of "book" that is used in the Qur'an for what was revealed to the prophets, which is especially used for books that consist of laws and injunctions. The same goes with using the term for something that records the events and occurrences of the universe in one way or another in God's knowledge. God says: *(It is) a Book We have revealed to you abounding in good* (38:29); *And We have made every man's bird of omen to cling to his neck, and We will bring forth to him on the Day of Resurrection a book which he will find wide open: Read your book* (17:13-14); *No evil befalls on the earth nor in your own souls, but it is in a book before We bring it into existence* (57:22). These three verses mark the three usages of "book" in the Qur'an when ascribed to God. The three meanings and usages of "book" in the Qur'an are:

(1) The scriptures which were revealed to the prophets and which

1 Perhaps it can be said that applying "book" to something that has not been written by hand is a generalization of its original meaning. (Auth.)

included religious laws, as we said above. God refers to Noah's book where He says: *and He revealed with them the Book with truth* (2:213); He refers to the book of Abraham and Moses in the verse: *The scriptures of Abraham and Moses* (87:19); He mentions the book of Jesus—the Gospel—where He says: *And We gave him the Gospel in which was guidance and light* (5:46); and He refers to Muḥammad's book in these verses: *These are the verses of the Book and (of) a clear Recitation* (15:1), *A messenger from Allah, reciting pure pages, Wherein are all the right scriptures* (98:2-3), *In honored books, exalted, purified; in the hands of scribes: noble, virtuous* (80:13-16) and: *The Faithful Spirit has descended with it upon your heart, that you may be of the warners, in plain Arabic language* (26:193-195).

(2) Books that record the good and evil actions of the people. There are several books in this sense. At the personal level, there are books for each individual, as mentioned in many verses such as: *And We have made every man's omen to cling to his neck, and We will bring forth to him on the Day of Resurrection a book* (17:13), and *The day that every soul shall find present what it has done of good and what it has done of evil* (3:30). Then there are books that record the actions of every nation and community, as indicated in the verse: *And you shall see every nation kneeling down; every nation shall be called to its book* (45:28). Finally, there is a book for all people, as God says: *This is Our book that speaks against you with justice; surely We wrote what you did* (45:29), assuming that verse is addressed to all humankind. This sense of book can also be classified according to the classification of the people into good-doers and evil-doers, as He says: *Nay! Most surely the record of the wicked is in the Sijjīn. And what will make you know what the Sijjīn is? It is a written book* (83:7-9) and then: *Nay! Most surely the record of the righteous shall be in the ʿIliyyūn. And what will make you know what the ʿIliyyūn is? It is a written book. Those who are drawn near (to Allah) shall witness it* (83:18-21).

(3) Records that incorporate detailed accounts of all events that occur in the universe. There is a book which is secure from all change, where everything is written, as mentioned in these verses: *And there does not lie concealed from your Lord the weight of an atom in the earth or in the heaven, nor anything less than that nor greater, but it is in a clear book* (10:61), *And We have recorded everything in a clear writing* (36:12), *And with Us is a writing that preserves* (50:4) and: *For every term there is a writing* (13:38). This also includes the appointed lifetimes that are fixed

and unchanging: *And a soul will not die but with the permission of Allah, a term fixed* (3:145). Perhaps this type of record is divided into a single universal book that includes all events for all beings, and individual books for every being that include the specific conditions of that being. The last two verses [13:38 and 3:145] and other similar verses allude to this idea. There are also records that are subject to change, effacement and establishment, as the Qur'an says: *Allah effaces and establishes what He wills, and with Him is the basis of the Book* (13:39). Details of each of these books shall be discussed in its appropriate place in this work, and God is to be sought for help.

The only exception here is how God describes the Torah: *And We ordained for him in the tablets admonition of every kind and clear explanation of all things* (7:145); *And he threw down the tablets and seized his brother* (7:150); *And when Moses' anger calmed down he took up the tablets, and in the writing thereof was guidance and mercy for those who fear for the sake of their Lord* (7:154).[1]

Discussion on the Meaning of "Judgment" in the Qur'an

Given its usage, it can be deduced that the root meaning of the term *ḥukm* (judgment, rule) is *manᶜ* (to stop, to prevent, to restrain). An authoritative or magisterial rule (*al-ḥukm al-mawlawī*) is called *ḥukm* because it prevents the audience from acting and exercising his will unconditionally. It reins the person from doing everything that he wishes.[2] A legal verdict is also called *ḥukm* because it prevents the case from being shaken by quarrel and dispute, and/or because it stops transgression and oppression. Propositions are also called *ḥukm* because they remove doubt and uncertainty. If something is characterized by *iḥkām* and *istiḥkām* (strength, establishment, robustness) it means that it is in a condition that prevents outside forces and factors from overcoming it or disintegrating its parts. Another sense of *iḥkām* (concision, compactness, integrity) is the opposite of *tafṣīl* (differentiation, elaboration). *Tafṣīl* is to separate something into parts and pieces, which causes the disintegration of its components and

1 These verses apparently suggest that the Torah was physically inscribed [on tablets]. (Auth.)

2 Apparently this root is derived from the word *ḥakamah*, which means "bit, rein, bridle." (Trans.)

breaks their unity. God says: *(This is) a Book, whose verses are made decisive* (uḥkimat, from iḥkām)*; then are they well-elaborated* (fuṣṣilat, from tafṣīl)*, from the All-Wise, the All-Aware* (11:1). *Muḥkam* (decisive, solid, clear) as opposed to *mutashābih* (ambiguous) also reduces to the same root.[1]

Al-Rāghib says in *al-Mufradāt*:

> The root of *ḥukm* is "to prevent and stop for the purpose of improvement and correction." It is from this root that an animal's bit is called *ḥakamah*. One says *ḥakamtu* and *aḥkamtu* when one controls an animal by a bit. *Aḥkamtuhā* means "I made a bit for it [the animal]." Similarly it is said: *ḥakamtu* or *aḥkamtu al-safīh*,[2] as a poet said: "O children of pure religion! Restrain your fools."

The *ḥukm* (judgment, rule) of God can have three meanings:

(1) Sometimes it is in matters pertaining to creation (*takwīn*). In these cases, God's *ḥukm* is His existential decree, which is His existentiation of things. That is when He brings something to existence. God's existential decree and rule (*ḥukm*) is inseparable from the actual and external existence of that thing at its level of existence.[3] He says: *And Allah judges; no one can repel His judgment* (13:41); *And when He decrees an affair, He only says to it "Be," so there it is* (2:117). The following verse can also be explained based on this type of divine judgment: *Those who were proud shall say: Surely we are all in it; surely Allah has judged between the servants* (40:48).

(2) Sometimes God's *ḥukm* is in legislative matters (*tashrīʿ*). In these cases, God's *ḥukm* refers to His authoritative command and legislation. He says: *And they have the Torah wherein is Allah's judgment* (5:43); *And who is better than Allah to judge?* (5:50).

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1 *Muḥkam* verses are those that are secure from multiple interpretations and the influence of personal opinion, as opposed to *mutashābih* verses. See verse 3:7. (Trans.)

2 The author has recorded the word as *safīnah*, meaning "ship." Therefore, *ḥakamtu* or *aḥkamtu al-safīnah* would mean: "I tied the ship." However, the original text of *al-Mufradāt* says *safīh*, and the poem that it quotes confirms this. The poem is by Jarīr b. ʿAṭiyyah al-Khaṭafī (d. 110 AH, 728 CE), where he asks the Muslims to hold back their fools from troubling him. (Trans.)

3 In other words, there is no temporal delay between God's existential decree and the creation of something. This is the same as the creative command "Be" (*kun*), which immediately gives existence to whatever God has willed, as mentioned in verses 2:117, 3:47, 3:59, 16:40, 19:35, 36:82 and 40:68. (Trans.

(3) Sometimes God's *ḥukm* refers to God's fulfilment of His promise and execution of His judgment, as the Qur'an says: *And Thy promise is surely true, and Thou art the most just of the judges* (11:45).[1]

When *ḥukm* is attributed to the prophets, it means "legal judgment. It refers to their position of making judicial decrees, which was given to them by God. The Qur'an says [to Prophet Muḥammad]: *Therefore judge between them by what Allah has revealed, and do not follow their low desires (to turn away) from the truth that has come to you* (5:48) and: *Those are they to whom We gave the book and the judgment* (6:89). Perhaps some verses which talk about "the prophets being given *ḥukm*" mean—either directly or indirectly—that they were made legislative authorities [that is, they were given the position to make laws.] One example is Abraham's supplication as narrated in the Qur'an: *My Lord: Grant me judgment* (ḥukman), *and join me with the righteous* (26:83).

The Qur'an ascribes two kinds of *ḥukm* to non-prophets: (1) *qaḍāʾ* (judgment, according to God's legislation), as it says: *And the followers of the Gospel should have judged by what Allah revealed in it* (5:47); (2) *tashrīʿ* (legislation of new laws regardless of God's revelation), which is disapproved in the Qur'an: *And they set apart a portion for Allah out of what He has created of crops and cattle, and they say: This is for Allah—in their make-believe—and this for our associates… evil is that which they judge* (6:136)

… therefore if these **(hāʾulāʾ)** ***disbelieve in it*** **(bihā)** ***We have already entrusted with it a people*** **(qawman)** ***who are not disbelievers in it*** **(bihā)*:*** The demonstrative pronoun "these" (*hāʾulāʾ*) refers to those who disbelieved in the Prophet's call. One group that is certainly among them would be the disbelievers in Mecca, whom God describes as follows: *Surely those who disbelieve, it is alike to them whether you warn them or you do not warn them; they will not believe* (2:6).

The pronoun "it" in *disbelieve in it* and *disbelievers in it* refers to "guidance" (*hudá*) [in the last verse: *This is Allah's guidance* (6:88)]. Although *hudá* is masculine it can be referred to by a feminine pronoun ["it" (*hā*)

1 This is part of Prophet Noah's supplication where he asks God to fulfil His promise. However, regardless of this specific context, the last statement of the verse—*Thou art the most just of the judges*—restricts *ḥukm* (judgment) in its legislative sense to God. In other words, the fulfilment of promise is an extension and continuation of legislative judgment. (Trans.)

in this verse] in the sense that it is *hidāyah* (guidance, in feminine form). However, a more plausible interpretation is that the pronoun "it" refers to *the book and the judgment and the prophethood* (6:89) as the results of God's guidance.[1]

Given the first interpretation of "it," the meaning would be: "If the polytheists among your people disbelieve in Our guidance—which is Our path—then We have already entrusted this guidance to some of Our servants who do not disbelieve in it." In this case, the object of belief and disbelief would be guidance, especially guidance in the sense of a path, as the Qur'an narrates [from the jinn]: *And that when we heard the guidance* (al-hudá)*, we believed in it* (72:13). This sense of guidance is attributed to God and His communications: *Then whoever follows My guidance* (hudāya)*, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve* (2:38).

Given the second interpretation of "it," the verse would mean: "If the polytheists in Mecca disbelieve in the book, the judgment and the prophethood—which define the divine path and the religious call—then We have already entrusted these to a people who do not disbelieve in it."

The word *qawman* (a people) is in the indefinite form, which shows the significance and lofty status of these "people." However, exegetes have widely disagreed over who these "people" are. Here is a list of their views followed by our evaluation:

(1) *A people* in this verse refers to the above-mentioned prophets, which numbered eighteen, or all prophets that are either named personally or described by: *And from among their fathers and their descendants and their brethren* (6:87).

Evaluation: The problem with this interpretation is that it contravenes the text of the verse, because *who are not disbelievers in it* is in the present or present continuous tense. This is while none of the above-mentioned prophets was present when these verses were revealed. If they were meant by the verse, then the verse should have said: "who *were* not disbelievers in it" [in the past tense]. Nor can one say that "a people" are the prophets including the Messenger of God who was alive at the time. Even though he was one of the prophets—and in fact the highest of them—he is not meant in this verse because he only comes into play in the next verse: *These are they whom Allah guided; therefore, follow their guidance* (6:90).

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1 In Arabic, singular feminine pronouns are also used for plural unintelligent beings. (Trans.)

(2) The verse refers to the angels.

Evaluation: As some exegetes have pointed out, the word *qawm* (people) is not used for angels, especially when it is used unconditionally [as in this verse]. It is not a meaning that springs to the mind at first. Moreover, the verse involves a tone of comforting the Prophet, but there is no comfort against the disbelief of his community by saying that the angels believe in him.

(3) *A people* here refers to those who had believed in the Prophet in Mecca before the revelation of this chapter, or all of the Muhājirīn (Meccan Immigrants).

Evaluation: The problem with this view is that some of those believers later apostatized. God describes one of them later in the chapter as: *he who says: I will reveal the like of what Allah has revealed* (6:93). Also, some of them were hypocrites. These groups cannot be called *a people who are not disbelievers in it*.[1]

(4) The verse refers to the Anṣār (Medinite Supporters), or to both the Muhājirīn and the Anṣār, or to all of the Prophet's Companions. They were those who uplifted the religious call, and who helped the Prophet in his difficult times. They are also has praised very highly elsewhere in the Qur'an.

Evaluation: Even though there is no doubt in the nobility and lofty status of these groups collectively, there was still among them those who turned back after believing, and also hypocrites who were not known at the time. These groups do not match a description such as: *We have already entrusted with it a people who are not disbelievers in it* (6:89) because this description apparently suggests that these people are completely free from disbelief. Otherwise it should have said: "We have already entrusted with it a people who will believe in it (*yuʾminūna bihā*)" or "who believed in it (*āmanū bihā*)."

(5) The verse is talking about the establishment and preservation of belief in a community as a whole, which does not contradict the existence of few individuals among them who are not believers. In other words, *who are not disbelievers in it* is a description of a group; if a few members of the group do not match this description, it does not entail that the group as a whole cannot have this description. This applies to the believers in

1 Since this is a nominal sentence (*ismiyyah*, in terms of its Arabic structure), it suggests continuity of their belief. (Trans.)

the Prophet—such as the Anṣār, or else both them and the Muhājirīn, or else all of his Companions—because belief was firmly established and maintained among them collectively even though it may have dissipated from some of them.

Evaluation: It should be noted that if this view sufficiently explains the verse, then "people" (*qawm*) would be all Muslims or all believers in all times. It cannot be restricted to only a subgroup of them [who lived at the time of revelation in Mecca and/or Medina]. It is true that some of these people had special religious merits and roles, such as the Muhājirīn being the first to believe in God and endure hardship in His way, or the Anṣār raising the message of monotheism and establishing themselves in the Prophet's place of migration and in faith [59:9]. However, this only makes the current verse an additional merit for them, but it does not make its description *limited* to them such that the description does not apply to others who also possess this quality of belief.

Yet, the above view suffers from the following problem: When it comes to describing a community by a quality that does not apply to all of its members, the Qur'an always specifies the exceptions that fall outside that description in one way or another if applicable. For example, God says: *Certainly We created humankind in the best make. Then We rendered him to the lowest of the low. Except those who believe* (95:4-6); *Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah, and those with him are strict against the disbelievers, compassionate among themselves… Allah has promised those among them who believe and do good, forgiveness and a great reward* (48:29);[1] *Surely the hypocrites are in the lowest stage of the Fire… Except those who repent and amend and hold fast to Allah and are sincere in their religion to Allah* (4:145-146); *How shall Allah guide a people who disbelieved after their believing… Except those who repent after that and amend* (3:86-89). This notion is found frequently throughout the Noble Qur'an. So how is it that the exceptions which fall outside *a people who are not disbelievers in it* are not mentioned here?

(6) A strange explanation offered by some exegetes is that the verse is about the Anṣār, and what it means by "not being disbelievers in it" is that when these verses were revealed, they had not rejected the Prophet's call as

1 The qualification *those among them* at the end of the verse is equivalent to an exception here because it reduces a universal statement to a particular one. (Trans.)

the Meccan polytheists had, even though they were not yet believers either.

Evaluation: There are several problems with this view: (i) It suffers from the same problem that we mentioned about the previous views.[1] (ii) At the time of revelation of these verses, the people of Medina—who later became the Anṣār—were polytheists and idolaters. Therefore it is not correct to deny their *kufr* (disbelief, infidelity)—unless one interprets *kufr* here as rejecting something after being called to it, which would be an act of defiance and arrogance. However, such an interpretation cannot be granted here because the purpose of these verses is to describe God's guidance, which is the opposite of associating partners with Him, as He said above: *and if they had associated others (with Him), certainly what they did would have become ineffectual for them* (6:88). (iii) "Entrustment" in this verse is a means to "preservation and maintenance." It does not make sense to say that "if these people disbelieve in it, then We shall preserve the message by a people who have neither accepted it nor rejected it."

(7) *A people* here refers to non-Arabs (*al-ʿajam*) even though they were not believers at the time.

Evaluation: Apparently this view is taken from the verse: *If He will, He can make you pass away, O people, and bring others* (4:133) where there are narrations saying that "others" are non-Arabs. However, this view also suffers from the same problems mentioned above.

(8) *A people* here refers to the believers among Muḥammad's nation, or believers in all nations.

Evaluation: This view also suffers from the same problems as mentioned above. Yet, it can be amended by saying that the verse is about certain individuals who believe in God and do not turn back to disbelief as long as they are alive. Such a group can be called "those who believe in this call, who are not disbelievers in it." Their disbelief remains a possibility, but this possibility never occurs because they persist in their belief, free from any tinge of disbelief or hypocrisy. Thus they can properly be described as *a people who are not disbelievers in it* (6:89). This interpretation also confirms the purpose of the verse, which is to console the Prophet and comfort his noble heart against the disbelief and defiance of the polytheists in response to his call to believe in God and His communications. It also conveys the intended notion of God's dominance in preserving His guidance and path with which He honored His chosen servants and prophets.

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1 That is the problem of continuity of belief. (Trans.)

However, the above view interprets the verse based on an accidental event, which is that some of those who believe in God's guidance happen to remain steadfast and not lose their faith, without anything to ensure this. This does not fit the expression, *We have already entrusted with it,* because entrustment entails trust and reliance, and involves a sense of preservation and maintenance. It does not make sense to take pride and boast in something when there is no guarantee that it shall persist and continue to function. Moreover, God has criticized many of those who believe by saying: *And most of them do not believe in Allah without associating others (with Him)* (12:106). This is while the current verses describe a sheer innate monotheism and a type of divine guidance that is pure and free from any mix of polytheism and iniquity. This [kind of pure belief and guidance] is what God blessed His friend Abraham with, as well as many noble prophets before and after him, as He narrates from Abraham: *Those who believe and do not mix up their belief with iniquity, those are they who shall have the security and they are those who have found guidance* (6:82). Not all believers can be considered as protectors and trustees from God to preserve this level of guidance from loss and corruption, because among them are certainly transgressors, sinners, pharaohs, tyrants, wrongdoers, innovators, and many who are immersed in iniquity and various forms of indecency and wickedness.

Our interpretation: *… therefore if these disbelieve in it We have already entrusted with it a people who are not disbelievers in it:* To explain this part of the verse plausibly, we should make note of a two points:

(1) The previous verses described innate monotheism and divine guidance that are free from any mix of associating others with God. They said that God has bestowed this guidance as a preferential treatment upon a continuous and united chain of prophets, some of them being descendants of others. God has chosen and guided them all to a straight path that is immune from any error, and has given them the book, judgment and the prophethood.

(2) Then God says, with a tone of pride and glory, while also consoling the Prophet: *therefore if these disbelieve in it We have already entrusted with it a people who are not disbelievers in it*. This comforts the Prophet's soul so that he may not be discouraged by sorrow, and may not lose his determination in making the religious call because of the denial, arrogance and blind transgression of his people.

Given these two points, the meaning would be: "Do not be grieved by what you see of their disbelief in this divine guidance and path which is

found in the book, the judgment and the prophethood that We gave to the guided chain of the noble prophets—for indeed We have entrusted this guidance to a people who are not disbelievers in it. As a result, there is no way that this divine guidance may undergo loss and destruction, because We have entrusted this chain with Our guidance and have relied on them to preserve it, and they are certainly not disbelievers in it."

The disbelief of these "people" [that is, the chain of prophets and saints] is inconceivable, and it is impossible for any tinge of polytheism to enter their hearts, because God has entrusted them with His path and has relied on them to preserve His guidance. If their polytheism and deviation were possible, then relying on them would be a mistake and error, but we know that God "neither errs nor forgets" [20:52].

Thus, the verse shows—and God knows best—that in every time and age God has one or more servants that have been entrusted with the same guidance and path which He gave to His prophets through their books, their judgment and their prophethood. Through them God preserves His religion against loss and His guidance against extinction. Polytheism and iniquity have no way to reach these people because they have clung to God's protection. These are the infallibles, including the noble prophets and their successors.

Given the above, this verse pertains exclusively to the infallibles. The most one can do in generalizing and extending the verse is to also include righteous believers who are safeguarded against polytheism and iniquity by maintaining *taqwá* (Godwariness, self-restraint, piety), good deeds and pure faith. They would be those who are out of Satan's authority, as God says: *Surely he has no authority over those who believe and rely on their Lord* (16:99). They can also be included in the verse if it can be maintained that God has entrusted them with His guidance and relied on them to preserve it.

أُولٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ فَبِهُداهُمُ اقْتَدِهْ قُلْ لا أَسْئَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْراً إِنْ هُوَ إِلاَّ ذِكْرى لِلْعالَمِينَ ﴿٩٠﴾

*(6:90) **These are they whom Allah guided, therefore follow*** **(iqtadih, from iqtidā') *their guidance. Say: I do not ask you for any reward for it; it is nothing but a reminder*** **(dhikrá)** ***to the nations.***

This verse provides another description of the above-mentioned

individuals, which were mentioned in order to define God's special guidance. His guidance certainly does not fail to have its intended impact, which is to make the person reach the goal [of eternal happiness]. He says: *Yet surely Allah does not guide one whom He leads astray* (16:37).

According to al-Rāghib, *dhikrá* is more expressive of the meaning of "reminder" than *dhikr*. The verse also shows the universality of the Prophet's prophethood for all people.

Iqtidāʾ means *ittibāʿ* (to follow, to emulate). God orders the Prophet to follow "their guidance" not "themselves." This is because the Prophet's shariah (legal code) abrogated theirs, his book overshadows theirs, and the above-mentioned guidance is a kind of guidance that comes without any intermediary between God and the person who is guided. The verse involves an honorary ascription of guidance to "them" by saying *their guidance*. Otherwise, this guidance is primarily attributable to God, as we read above: *This is Allah's guidance…* (6:88).

Based on this verse, some exegetes have inferred that the Prophet and his followers used to practice the ritual and legal codes of the previous prophets except in cases that were specifically abrogated. However, this interpretation would only be plausible had the verse said, "follow *them*," but the verse says, "follow *their guidance*." Clearly the above interpretation cannot be deduced from this expression.

God then concludes His speech about innate monotheism and divine guidance by addressing His Prophet: *Say: I do not ask you for any reward for it; it is nothing but a reminder to the nations* (6:90). It is as if the verse is giving the following commands to the Prophet: (1) Follow the divine guidance which the previous prophets followed. (2) Remind all nations of the divine guidance without asking them for any reward for it. (3) Tell them this to assure their souls, to make your call succeed, and to be farther away from any accusation. God has also narrated this point [that the prophets do not require any compensation from their nations for their mission] from Noah and the later prophets as part of their call.

Examining Narrations

(1) Elias [the Prophet] went to the house of an Israelite lady who had an ill son named al-Yasaʿ b. Ukhṭūb (Elisha).[1] The lady gave him

1 This is recorded as Elisha the son of Shaphat in 1 Kings 19:16. (Trans.)

shelter and hid him [from his enemies]. Thus Elias prayed for her son, who was cured from his ailment. As a result, Elisha believed in Elias, followed him and became his companion. He used to follow Elias wherever he went. When Elias was being raised to heaven, Elisha called to him: "O Elias! What do you say I should do?" Thereupon Elias threw his cloak upon him from the higher heaven, and that was a sign that Elisha would be his successor from amongst the Children of Israel.

God gave prophecy to Elisha by His grace and sent him as a prophet and messenger to the Children of Israel. God revealed to him and supported him as He had supported His servant Elias. Thus the Israelites believed in him, respected him, and abided by his commands and prohibitions. They lived under God's rule as long Elisha was among them.[1]

(2) Imam al-Riḍā said: Elisha (al-Yasaʿ) used to perform miracles that were similar to what Jesus performed. He walked on water, brought the dead back to life, and cured the blind and the epileptic. However, his people did not make a god out of him!...[2]

(3) Concerning verse 6:84 Imam al-Bāqir said: *And We gave to him Isaac and Jacob; each did We guide*—so that We keep it [that is, the divine guidance] in his progeny—*and Noah did We guide before*— so that We keep it in his progeny.[3] Thus the descendants of the prophets commanded those who were before Abraham to [believe in] Abraham.[4]

Author's comment: This confirms our view that the theme of these verses is to explain the continuity of the chain of divine guidance.

(4) Imam al-Ṣādiq said: The one who holds this matter [that is, the bearer of divine guardianship, the Imam of the Time] has

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1 Thaʿlabī's *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ*.

2 This is one of the Imam's arguments against a Christian bishop (titled Jāthlīq). It is part of a long narration reported in *Biḥār al-Anwār*, on the authority of *al-Iḥtijāj*, *al-Tawḥīd* and *al-ʿUyūn*, on the authority of al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Nawfalī.

3 In other words, "We guided Abraham's descendants and ancestors so that Our guidance may continue in the same household." (Trans.)

4 *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, on the authority of Muḥammad b. al-Fuḍayl, on the authority of al-Thumālī.

his companions preserved for him. Even if all people are gone, God will bring his companions [to him]. God says about them: *Therefore if these disbelieve in it We have already entrusted with it a people who are not disbelievers in it* (6:89) and: *Then Allah will bring a people whom He loves and they love Him, who are lowly before the believers, mighty against the disbelievers* (5:54).[1]

Author's comment: This narration is based on *jary* (the verse having particular applications in different times).

(5) Imam al-Bāqir said: God says in His Book: *and Noah did We guide before… disbelievers in it* (6:89). Thus He has entrusted the virtuous among his [the Prophet's] Household, brothers and descendants [with His religion and guidance]. He is saying: "Therefore if your people disbelieve in it, We have already entrusted your Household with the faith with which We sent you, and they shall never disbelieve in it. I shall not remove the faith—with which I have sent you—from your Household. They are the scholars of your nation after you, the guardians of My covenant, and those who can extract the knowledge which is free from lie, sin, burden, extravagance and show."[2]

Author's comment: This narration is also an example of specific application (*jary*) like the last one.

(6) Imam al-Ṣādiq said: Once I went to Abū al-ʿAbbās [al-Manṣūr]. Everyone was sitting in his place and the table cloth was spread out and ready before him. He extended his hand toward me [to shake], so I set off toward him but I stepped on the side of the table cloth. Only God knows how much I was grieved by that, for indeed God says: *Therefore if these disbelieve in it We have already entrusted with it a people who are not disbelievers in it* (6:89). By God these are a people who establish the prayer, pay the alms and remember God a lot.[3]

Author's comment: The gist of this narration is that the Imam felt

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1 Al-Nuʿmānī, *al-Ghaybah*, via its chain of narration, on the authority of Sulaymān b. Hārūn al-ʿIjlī.

2 *Al-Kāfī*, via its chain of narration, on the authority of Abū Ḥamzah. Al-ʿAyyāshī has narrated this hadith and the one before with an incomplete chain of transmission (*mursal*).

3 *Al-Maḥāsin*, via its chain of narration, on the authority of ʿAlī b. ʿUyaynah.

embarrassed before God even for involuntarily stepping on the side of the table cloth. He saw this as a form of ungratefulness to God's bounty. Therefore, the hadith extends *kufr* in *who are not disbelievers in it* (bi-kāfirīn) (6:89) to mean ungratefulness for bounties.[1]

(7) Imam ʿAlī said: Follow the guidance of your Prophet, for that is indeed the best guidance.[2]

Author's comment: This idea can easily be deduced from the [above] verses of the Qur'an.[3]

(8) The Prophet said: The best guidance is the guidance of the prophets.[4]

Examining Narrations: Islam Considers the Children of one's Daughter to be one's own Children and Descendants

(1) Imam al-Ṣādiq said: "By God, in the Qur'an God has connected Jesus son of Mary to Abraham via women [that is, via his mother Mary]." The Imam then recited: *And of his descendants, David and Solomon... and Jesus* (6:84-85).[5]

(2) Once al-Ḥajjāj summoned Yaḥyá b. Muʿammar and told him, "I have been told that you think al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn count as the Prophet's *dhurriyyah* (descendants, progeny, lineage) based on God's Book. I have read God's Book from beginning to end but I have not found this there."

Yaḥyá replied, "Have you not read Sūrah al-Anʿām: *and of his descendants* (dhurriyyatihi), *David and Solomon… and John and Jesus* (6:84-85)?" He added, "Isn't Jesus among Abraham's descendants (*dhurriyyah*)?"

Al-Ḥajjāj answered, "Yes, I have read this."[6]

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1 *Kufr* means both "disbelief" and "ungratefulness." Therefore, *kāfirīn* in the verse can mean both "disbelievers" and "the ungrateful." (Trans.)

2 *Nahj al-balāghah*.

3 The narration uses the same verb *iqtidā'* (to follow) as used in the verse.

4 *Tafsīr al-Qummī*.

5 Narrated on the authority of Bashīr al-Dahhān via a connected chain of transmission in *al-Kāfī*, and via an incomplete chain of transmission (*mursal*) in *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*.

6 *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, on the authority of Abū Ḥarb b. Abū al-Aswad. A similar

(3) Once Yaḥyá b. Muʿammar went to al-Ḥajjāj. In their conversation there was a mention of al-Ḥusayn, where al-Ḥajjāj said, "He is not part of the Prophet's *dhurriyyah*."
Yaḥyá replied, "That is not true."
He said, "What evidence can you bring?"
So Yaḥyá recited these verses: *and of his descendants, David and Solomon… and John and Jesus and Elias* (6:84-85). Then he explained, "Here God is saying that Jesus is a descendant of Abraham through his mother."
Al-Ḥajjāj said, "You are right."[1]

Author's comment: Concerning, *and Jesus* (6:85), al-Ālūsī says in *Rūḥ al-maʿānī*:

> The mention of Jesus here shows that one's descendants also include the children of one's daughters, because Jesus' connection to Abraham was only through his mother.
> Some have objected to this as follows: Jesus had no father to take precedence over his mother in ascription. Therefore one cannot set his case as a basis for including others in the descendants of their maternal grandfathers. He was included among Abraham's descendants only because he had no father.
> However, this objection deviates from the apparent meaning of the verse, although the scholars are not unanimous about this issue. Those who consider one's descendants to include the children of one's daughter have used this verse to support their stance—such as Mūsá al-Kāẓim who drew on this verse to argue against [Hārūn] al-Rashīd, as narrated in some sources.

Al-Tafsīr al-kabīr says:

> Abū Jaʿfar [Imam al-Bāqir] argued against al-Ḥajjāj with this verse and the verse of Mubāhalah—because the Prophet called al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn when it was revealed: *Come let us call our sons…* (3:61).[2] Some exegetes have said that this is among those

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account has been narrated in *al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of Ibn Abī Ḥātim, on the authority of Abū Ḥarab b. Abū al-Aswad.

1 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of Abū al-Shaykh, al-Ḥākim and al-Bayhaqī, on the authority of ʿAbd al-Malik b. ʿUmayr.

2 The argument is that Prophet Muḥammad chose al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn as

things that only apply to the Prophet.[1] Our companions [that is, Ashᶜarite scholars] have disagreed over this issue, but I incline more to inclusion.

(4) Once the Prophet referred to al-Ḥasan and said: This son of mine is a *sayyid* (master, chief).[2]

(5) The Prophet said: Among all children of Adam, their lineage is through their father, except the children of Fāṭimah, for I am their father and pedigree.[3]

Author's comment: *Al-Manār* has quoted the last two narrations. Then it says:

> Arabs do not use the term "son" (*ibn*) for the children of one's daughter.… Nevertheless, people [that is, Muslims in general] have accepted this about the children of Fāṭimah—that they count as the children, sons, family and household of the Prophet.

Author's comment: There has been some confusion in this regard, and some prominent scholars have mistaken the matter as something lexical which needs to be clarified by an etymological study. Thus they have quoted the following poems as evidence:

بنونا بنو أبنائنا و بناتنا بنوهن أبناء الرجال الأباعد

Our children are the children of our sons alone;
The children of our daughters are not our own.

و إنما أمهات الناس أوعية مستودعات و للأنساب آباء

Mothers are receptacles, but only for a while;
Fathers determine one's lineage and profile.

Citing such quotes misses the point, because this is a socio-legal issue and that pertains to the topic of *qarābah* (kinship, family relationship).

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his "sons" although they were his daughter's sons. (Trans.)

1 In other words, it is only in the case of the Prophet where the children of his daughter count as his own descendants. (Trans.)

2 *Al-Bukhārī*, with an unconnected chain of transmission (*marfūᶜ*), on the authority of Abū Bakrah.

3 Abū Nuᶜaym, *Maᶜrifat al-ṣaḥābah*, with an unconnected chain of transmission (*marfūᶜ*), on the authority of ᶜUmar.

Different nations and communities differ in how they define and identify kinship. For example: (1) Are women included in it or not? (2) Do the children of one's daughter count as his own children? (3) Is kinship only through birth or does it also include *iddiʿāʾ* (attribution)?[1] Arabs during the pre-Islamic era (*jāhiliyyah*) considered women to only hold "natural" kinship, where they would get married, be provided for by their spouse, and so on. They did not consider women to hold any "legal" kinship where they would be entitled to inheritance and other legal rights. They also did not consider the children of one's daughter to be part of one's kin, but they considered attributed children (*adʿiyāʾ*) to be part of one's kin. They would use the word *ibn* (son) for an attributed son. Their practice did not have any lexical basis, but rather they were following the civic laws or tribal customs that were practiced in advanced neighboring nations such as Rome and Persia.

When Islam came, it abolished the kinship of attributed children altogether. The Qur'an says: *Nor has He made those whom you claim to be your sons your real sons* (33:4). Moreover, Islam revised kinship to include women—with its legal implications [such as inheritance]. It also treated the children of one's daughter to be one's own children. God says in verses about inheritance: *Allah enjoins you concerning your children: the male shall have the equal of the portion of two females* (4:11); *Men shall have a portion of what the parents and the near relatives leave, and women shall have a portion of what the parents and the near relatives leave, whether there is little or much of it* (4:7).

Concerning unlawful marriages, God says: *Forbidden to you are your mothers and your daughters…and lawful for you are (all women) besides those* (4:23-24), where He clearly uses *daughter* for the daughter of one's daughter.[2] God also says: *and John and Jesus and Elias* (6:85), where God counts Jesus to be a descendant of Abraham or Noah, while he only connects to them through his mother.

The Imams from the Prophet's Household (Ahl al-Bayt) have used this

1 *Iddiʿāʾ* (lit. claim) is when one is claimed to be a man's child when he is not the real father. It is similar to adoption. (Trans.)

2 In other words, undoubtedly it is unlawful to marry the daughter of one's daughter according to verse 4:23, but the verse does not explicitly mention this group. This shows that God has used the word "daughters" not only for one's immediate daughters, but also for their daughters. (Trans.)

verse [6:85], the verse about unlawful marriages [4:23] and the verse of *Mubāhalah* [3:61] to argue that the child of one's daughter is one's child. These proofs are universal even though the Imams have used them for particular cases.[1] Imam al-Bāqir has an argument in this regard that is more explicit than all of the above, which follows.

(6) Abū al-Jārūd says: Once Imam al-Bāqir asked me: "O Abū al-Jārūd! What do they [non-Shias] tell you about al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn?"

I said, "They do not grant us that they were the sons of God's Messenger."

He asked, "And how do you argue against them?"

I said, "We argue against them by these words of God about Jesus son of Mary: *And of his descendants, David and Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses and Aaron; and thus do We reward the good-doers. And Zachariah, John and Jesus* (6:84-85), where He includes Jesus son of Mary among the descendants of Noah."

He asked, "What do they tell you in response?"

I said, "They tell us that the son of one's daughter can be considered one's child (*walad*), but he doesn't count as part of one's loin (*ṣulb*)."[2]

He asked, "And how do you rebut that?"

"We rebut that," I said, "by what God says to His Messenger: *Then say: Come let us call our sons and your sons, and our women and your women, and ourselves and yourselves* (3:61)."

He asked, "What do they say?"

I said, "They say that in Arabic, sometimes one refers to the sons of another person as 'our sons.'"

Then Imam al-Bāqir said, "I shall indeed give you a proof from the Book of God showing that they are from the loins of God's Messenger; a proof that only a disbeliever would reject."

I asked, "And what is that? May I be your ransom!"

He said, "It is where God says: *Forbidden to you are your mothers and your daughters and your sisters…*" and he recited up to: *and the wives of your sons who are of your own loins* (4:23). Then he

1 In other words, the Imams have specifically quoted these verses for al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, but the same conclusion is applicable to all people. (Trans.)

2 Being from one's loin means being truly a child and descendant of the person, with all the natural, legal, and conventional implications of it. (Trans.)

added, "O Abā al-Jārūd! Would it have been permissible for the Messenger of God to marry the wives of either of them [al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn]? If they say yes, then they have clearly lied and erred; and if they say no, then it is established that al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn are his sons from his loins."[1]

Author's comment: Overall, this is not a linguistic or lexical matter. Islam has established both natural and legal kinship for women.[2] Similarly, Islam considers the children of one's daughter to be one's children. The family tree runs through a woman just as it runs through a man. On the other hand, Islam has abolished lineage through attribution and through unlawful intercourse. Both Shias and Sunnis have narrated from the Prophet: "The child belongs to the husband, and for the adulterer there shall be stone."

The only thing is that people have forgotten this fact due to their negligence in religious matters. Thus they only hold on to *some* of what holds for the children of one's daughter, such their entitlement to inheritance, and the unlawfulness of marrying them. The governments which ruled during the early years of Islam also had a role in this. We discussed this under the verses about unlawful marriages [4:23-24] above.[3]

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1 *Al-Kāfī*, via its chain of narration, on the authority of ʿAbd al-Ṣamad b. Bashīr. Al-Qummī has narrated a similar account to this in his *Tafsīr*.

2 What is meant by natural kinship (*al-qarābat al-ṭabīʿiyyah*) is not merely birth and the inevitable heredity that comes with it, which are found among animals. Instead, it means a kinship that naturally entails and calls for certain legal rules, without the need for further legislation, such as the children of a person belonging to him, and the person counting as the guardian of one's child. These laws are equivalent to natural laws to jurists, as opposed to other laws that require additional legislation. (Auth.)
The opposite of natural kinship would be legal kinship (*al-qarābat al-tashrīʿiyyah*), which defines more specific laws such as inheritance and *nafaqah* (the husband's responsibility to pay for the expenses of his wife). (Trans.)

3 See volume 8 of the English translation, pp. 154ff. (Trans.)

Verses 91-105

وَ ما قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ إِذْ قالُوا ما أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلى بَشَرٍ مِنْ شَيْءٍ قُلْ مَنْ أَنْزَلَ
الْكِتابَ الَّذِي جاءَ بِهِ مُوسى نُوراً وَ هُدىً لِلنَّاسِ تَجْعَلُونَهُ قَراطِيسَ تُبْدُونَها وَ
تُخْفُونَ كَثِيراً وَ عُلِّمْتُمْ ما لَمْ تَعْلَمُوا أَنْتُمْ وَ لا آباؤُكُمْ قُلِ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ ذَرْهُمْ فِي
خَوْضِهِمْ يَلْعَبُونَ ﴿٩١﴾ وَ هذا كِتابٌ أَنْزَلْناهُ مُبارَكٌ مُصَدِّقُ الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَ
لِتُنْذِرَ أُمَّ الْقُرى وَ مَنْ حَوْلَها وَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَ هُمْ عَلى
صَلاتِهِمْ يُحافِظُونَ ﴿٩٢﴾ وَ مَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِباً أَوْ قالَ أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ وَ
لَمْ يُوحَ إِلَيْهِ شَيْءٌ وَ مَنْ قالَ سَأُنْزِلُ مِثْلَ ما أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ وَ لَوْ تَرى إِذِ الظَّالِمُونَ فِي
غَمَراتِ الْمَوْتِ وَ الْمَلائِكَةُ باسِطُوا أَيْدِيهِمْ أَخْرِجُوا أَنْفُسَكُمُ الْيَوْمَ تُجْزَوْنَ
عَذابَ الْهُونِ بِما كُنْتُمْ تَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ وَ كُنْتُمْ عَنْ آياتِهِ تَسْتَكْبِرُونَ
﴿٩٣﴾ وَ لَقَدْ جِئْتُمُونا فُرادى كَما خَلَقْناكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَ تَرَكْتُمْ ما خَوَّلْناكُمْ
وَراءَ ظُهُورِكُمْ وَ ما نَرى مَعَكُمْ شُفَعاءَكُمُ الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُمْ أَنَّهُمْ فِيكُمْ شُرَكاءُ
لَقَدْ تَقَطَّعَ بَيْنَكُمْ وَ ضَلَّ عَنْكُمْ ما كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ ﴿٩٤﴾ إِنَّ اللَّهَ فالِقُ الْحَبِّ وَ
النَّوى يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَ مُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتِ مِنَ الْحَيِّ ذلِكُمُ اللَّهُ فَأَنَّى
تُؤْفَكُونَ ﴿٩٥﴾ فالِقُ الْإِصْباحِ وَ جَعَلَ اللَّيْلَ سَكَناً وَ الشَّمْسَ وَ الْقَمَرَ حُسْباناً
ذلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ ﴿٩٦﴾ وَ هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ النُّجُومَ لِتَهْتَدُوا بِها فِي
ظُلُماتِ الْبَرِّ وَ الْبَحْرِ قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْآياتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٩٧﴾ وَ هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْشَأَكُمْ
مِنْ نَفْسٍ واحِدَةٍ فَمُسْتَقَرٌّ وَ مُسْتَوْدَعٌ قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْآياتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿٩٨﴾ وَ
هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّماءِ ماءً فَأَخْرَجْنا بِهِ نَباتَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ فَأَخْرَجْنا مِنْهُ خَضِراً
نُخْرِجُ مِنْهُ حَبًّا مُتَراكِباً وَ مِنَ النَّخْلِ مِنْ طَلْعِها قِنْوانٌ دانِيَةٌ وَ جَنَّاتٍ مِنْ

أَعْنابٍ وَ الزَّيْتُونَ وَ الرُّمَّانَ مُشْتَبِهاً وَ غَيْرَ مُتَشابِهٍ انْظُرُوا إِلى ثَمَرِهِ إِذا أَثْمَرَ وَ يَنْعِهِ إِنَّ فِي ذلِكُمْ لَآياتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٩٩﴾ وَ جَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ شُرَكاءَ الْجِنَّ وَ خَلَقَهُمْ وَ خَرَقُوا لَهُ بَنِينَ وَ بَناتٍ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ سُبْحانَهُ وَ تَعالى عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ ﴿١٠٠﴾ بَدِيعُ السَّماواتِ وَ الْأَرْضِ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لَهُ وَلَدٌ وَ لَمْ تَكُنْ لَهُ صاحِبَةٌ وَ خَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ وَ هُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٠١﴾ ذلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ لا إِلهَ إِلاَّ هُوَ خالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ فَاعْبُدُوهُ وَ هُوَ عَلى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ ﴿١٠٢﴾ لا تُدْرِكُهُ الْأَبْصارُ وَ هُوَ يُدْرِكُ الْأَبْصارَ وَ هُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ ﴿١٠٣﴾ قَدْ جاءَكُمْ بَصائِرُ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَمَنْ أَبْصَرَ فَلِنَفْسِهِ وَ مَنْ عَمِيَ فَعَلَيْها وَ ما أَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِحَفِيظٍ ﴿١٠٤﴾ وَ كَذلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ الْآياتِ وَ لِيَقُولُوا دَرَسْتَ وَ لِنُبَيِّنَهُ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾

(6:91) *And they have not honored Allah with the honor that is due to Him when they say: Allah has not revealed anything to a mortal. Say: Who revealed the Book which Moses brought, a light and guidance for the people, which you make into parchment that you show while you conceal much? And you were taught what you did not know, (neither) you nor your fathers. Say: Allah. Then leave them sporting in their vain discourse.*

(6:92) *And this is a Book We have revealed, blessed, verifying that which was before it, and that you may warn the Mother of Cities and those around her; and those who believe in the hereafter believe in it, and they keep a guard on their prayers.*

(6:93) *And who is more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah, or says: It has been revealed to me; while nothing has been revealed to him, and he who says: I will reveal the like of what Allah has revealed? And if you had seen when the unjust shall be in the agonies of death and the angels stretching out their hands: Give up your souls; today shall you be recompensed with an ignominious chastisement because you spoke against Allah other than the truth and (because) you showed pride toward His communications.*

(6:94) *And certainly you have come to Us alone as We created you at first, and you have left behind your backs the things which We gave you, and We do not see with you your intercessors about*

whom you asserted that they were (Allah's) associates in respect to you; certainly the ties between you are now cut off and what you asserted is gone from you.

(6:95) *Surely Allah is the splitter of the grain and the date-stone [to germinate]; He brings forth the living from the dead and He is the bringer forth of the dead from the living; that is Allah! How are you then turned away?*

(6:96) *Splitter of the dawn; and He has made the night for rest, and the sun and the moon for reckoning; this is an arrangement of the Mighty, the Knowing.*

(6:97) *And He it is Who has made the stars for you that you might follow the right way thereby in the darkness of the land and the sea; truly We have elaborated the signs for a people who know.*

(6:98) *And He it is Who has produced you from a single soul, and (has given you) a dwelling-place and a repository; indeed We have elaborated the signs for a people who discern.*

(6:99) *And He it is Who sends down water from above, then We bring forth with it plants of every kind, then We bring forth from it green (foliage) from which We produce grain piled up (in the ear); and of the palm-tree, of the sheaths of it, come forth clusters (of dates) within reach, and gardens of grapes and olives and pomegranates, alike and unlike; behold the fruit of it when it yields the fruit and the ripening of it; most surely there are signs in this for a people who believe.*

(6:100) *And they make the jinn associates with Allah, while He created them, and they falsely attribute to Him sons and daughters without knowledge; glory be to Him, and highly exalted is He above what they ascribe (to Him).*

(6:101) *Originator of the heavens and the earth! How could He have a son when He has no consort, and He (Himself) created everything, and He is the Knower of all things.*

(6:102) *That is Allah, your Lord, there is no god but He; the Creator of all things, therefore serve Him, and He is Guardian over all things.*

(6:103) *No vision comprehends Him, but He comprehends all vision; and He is the All-Subtle, the All-Aware.*

(6:104) *Indeed there have come to you clear proofs from your Lord; whoever will therefore see, it is for his own soul, and whoever will be*

blind, it shall be against himself, and I am not a keeper over you.
(6:105) *And thus do We repeat the communications and that they may say: You have read; and that We may make it clear to a people who know.*

Introduction

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These verses have a moderate connection to the previous verses. The People of the Book denied the Prophet's claim to a divine message by saying: *Allah has not revealed anything to a mortal* (6:91). Thus the Qur'an responds to them by reminding them of God's revelation of scriptures to themselves. This links to the previous set of verses about God's special guidance of the prophets, where part of it was that they were given a book.

These verses start by arguing against the People of the Book. Then they mention that the greatest *ẓulm* (injustice, iniquity, wrongdoing) is to forge partners with God or commit injustice with regards to prophethood by either denying a true prophet or falsely claiming to be a prophet—as in the case of one who says: *I will reveal the like of what Allah has revealed* (6:93).

The verses then continue to talk about the end of such unjust people when they are overcome by death and are questioned by the angels who open their hands. The verses then present some signs of God's unity in brief, and some of the best names of God and His sublime attributes.

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وَ ما قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ إِذْ قالُوا ما أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلى بَشَرٍ مِنْ شَيْءٍ قُلْ مَنْ أَنْزَلَ الْكِتابَ الَّذِي جاءَ بِهِ مُوسى نُوراً وَ هُدىً لِلنَّاسِ تَجْعَلُونَهُ قَراطِيسَ تُبْدُونَها وَ تُخْفُونَ كَثِيراً وَ عُلِّمْتُمْ ما لَمْ تَعْلَمُوا أَنْتُمْ وَ لا آباؤُكُمْ قُلِ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ ذَرْهُمْ فِي خَوْضِهِمْ يَلْعَبُونَ ﴿٩١﴾

(6:91) And they have not measured* (qadarū) *Allah with His due measure* (qadrihi) *when they say: Allah has not revealed anything to a mortal. Say: Who revealed the Book which Moses brought, a light and guidance for the people, which you make into parchment that you show while you conceal much? And you were taught what you did not know, (neither) you nor your fathers. Say: Allah. Then leave them sporting in their vain discourse.

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Qadr and *qadar* mean "the size of something in terms of smallness, largeness and the like." The verbs *qadartu* and *qaddartu* are used when one

measures and finds out the physical size, shape and quantity of something. However, the root has then been generalized and used also for non-physical things. For example the *qadr* of a person—in the sight of others and in society—means how much people respect, regard and value that person.

Usually, measures the limits of something is followed by providing a description of its qualities, which in turn results in knowledge about that thing. That is why *qadr* and *taqdīr* are also used, metaphorically, for "description of something" and "knowledge of something." For example, *qadara* or *qaddara al-shay'* means "he described it." It can also mean "he recognized it." The lexical meaning of the root allows for all of these meanings.[1]

The holy essence of God cannot be embraced by any sense, imagination or intellect. Instead, only some of His holy attributes can ever be known to a certain extent, and one can regard Him only as much as what one comprehends of His signs and actions. Hence, *qadr* in this verse can mean any of the above meanings.[2] In other words, what is mentioned in this verse—*And they have not measured Allah with His due measure*—can mean any of the following: (1) They did not respect and regard God as He deserves to be respected. (2) They did not describe Him as He deserves to be described. (3) They have not known Him as He deserves to be known.

The verse by itself can be interpreted according to any of these three meanings, or according to all of them, where one meaning would be an implication of another. However, we should also interpret the verse given the theme of the previous verses and in relation to them. The above verses talked about God's guidance of His prophets, which entailed that they were given the book, judgment and prophethood [6:89]. They referred to His complete care in maintaining the message of truth and the bounty of guidance amongst the people throughout history, generation after generation [6:89]. Given this thread of meaning, the first interpretation is the most plausible, because denying God's revelation [of scriptures to His prophets in order to guide humankind] would be disregarding and underestimating His value. Such denial entails that God is not a Lord Who

1 Here *qadara* and *qaddara* (or *qadr* and *taqdīr*) are synonymous and are both transitive. (Trans.)

2 Three main meanings were discussed above for *qadr*: (1) respect, regard, value; (2) description; and (3) knowledge. (Trans.)

cares for the affairs of His servants, Who has neglected to guide them to their goal of happiness and salvation.

The first interpretation is also confirmed by the usage of the same expression in the following verses: *And they have not measured Allah with His due measure; but the whole earth shall be in His grip on the Day of Resurrection and the heavens rolled up in His right hand; glory be to Him, and may He be exalted above what they associate (with Him)* (39:67); *Surely those whom you call upon besides Allah cannot create a fly, though they should all gather for it, and should the fly snatch away anything from them, they could not take it back from it; weak are the seeker and the sought. And they have not measured Allah with His due measure; most surely Allah is Strong, Mighty* (22:73-74). These verses mean that the power and might of God on the one hand, and the weakness and abasement of others on the other hand, necessitate that His honor and value should not be downgraded such that He is set equal to what they worship besides Him, whereby they equally consider Him and their idols to be lords and gods.

Therefore, the first meaning is most relevant, although the other two meanings are also possible. Some exegetes have said that *And they have not measured (*qadarū) *Allah with the measure (*qadr) *that is due to Him* means that "they have not ascribed the power that He deserves to Him." This is the least likely meaning given the theme and context of the verse.

The verse has qualified this statement—that *they have not measured Allah with His due measure*—by adding: *when they say: Allah has not revealed anything to a mortal*. This shows that what is meant by their lack of regard and honor for God is that they denied God having sent any revelation or scripture to a human being. This implies that if someone is to be accepted as a god and lord, he must send revelation and scripture to guide the people to the straight path which leads them to their happiness in this world and the hereafter. This is what the verse claims.

God then provides two arguments to prove this claim: (1) *Say: Who revealed the Book which Moses brought…* (6:91); and (2) *And you were taught what you did not know, (neither) you nor your father* (6:91). The first argument draws on the revelation of divine books upon prophets whose prophethood has been otherwise established by the evident miracles that they brought. This argument is based on the continuity and preservation of God's guidance among the people by means of the prophets from Noah onwards. This guidance is what God described in the verses above, from:

And when Abraham said to his father Azar… (6:74) to: *it is nothing but a reminder to the nations* (6:90).

The second argument refers to the presence of certain divine teachings and laws among humans, which they could not have ever arrived at on their own. The human being is a social creature with an intellect and certain emotions that can lead it to seek its gain, avoid its loss, and acquire what it needs for its life, such as food, shelter, clothes and sex. These all fall under the category of material enjoyment, which is what humankind readily finds given its animal nature. However, divine teachings, noble moral virtues, and the legal codes which put those teachings and virtues into practice are not things that humankind can achieve by its collective reason. How can collective reason ever arrive at such teachings? The role and function of collective human reason is to guide people to utilize every means and instrument possible to fulfil their earthly needs and achieve their goals regarding food, drink, sex, clothes, shelter and so on. It also helps every individual to break any resistance that stops him from his personal enjoyment if he can—or, if that is not possible, to cooperate with others toward their common interest with an equitable distribution. This is why humankind is social, as we explained in our discussion of prophethood under the verse: *(All) people are a single nation; so Allah raised prophets…* (2:213).[1] Below we shall clarify this further, by God's will.

In short, taking its different aspects into consideration, this verse—*And they have not measured Allah with His due measure* (6:91)—states that God shall necessarily guide humankind to the straight path and a happy end by sending a book and revelation to some individuals. The verse provides two proofs for this conclusion: (1) there are already such books of guidance that God has sent; and (2) there exist certain divine teachings among humankind that cannot be a result of their collective reason.

Say: Who revealed the Book which Moses brought, a light and guidance for the people, which you make into* (tajʿalūnahu) *parchment* (qarāṭīs) *that you show while you conceal much?: The common recitation of the verse is with *tajʿalūnahu* in second person (that is, "which *you* make into…"), where the audience would certainly be the Jews. However, the word has also been recited as *yajʿalūnahu* in third person (that is,

1 In other words, humankind is social by necessity. One cannot achieve all of one's needs and wants alone, so people have no choice but to live and work together in the way of their mutual interest. (Trans.)

"which *they* make into…"). In this case, the audience—in *Who revealed the Book?*—would be either the Jews or the polytheists of Arabia. Thus has been said.

Qarāṭīs is the plural of *qirṭās* (parchment, paper, sheet). This part of the verse can be interpreted in two ways: (1) you place the book *in* parchment by writing on it; or (2) you make the actual book out of parchment, meaning that you convert the book into the form of parchment which has writing on it. In other words, the term "book" may refer to two things: (1) the letters that are written; and (2) the parchment or papers on which the letters are written.[1]

Say: Who revealed the Book which Moses brought: Here the verse responds to their claim: *when they say: Allah has not revealed anything to a mortal* (6:91). The verse does not explicitly identify who made this claim, but the particularities of the answer leave no doubt that it is addressed to the Jews, which means that they are the ones who said: *Allah has not revealed anything to a mortal* (6:91). There are three reasons for this. (1) The verse brings in the book of Moses as evidence to argue against those who made this claim. Such an argument would not make sense against the polytheists because they did not believe in Moses' book as a scripture that had been revealed by God. The People of the Book, on the other hand, believed in it. (2) The verse criticizes them for making this book into parchment that shows some but conceals much. This was a specific quality of the Jews, not the polytheists. (3) The subsequent part of the verse says: *And you were taught what you did not know, (neither) you nor your fathers*. Clearly the Jews would be the relevant audience of this straightforward statement, not the polytheists or the Muslims. We shall discuss this part of the verse further below, if God wills.

One problem is that the Jews believed in the prophethood of God's prophets up to Moses, and in the revelation of divine books such as the Torah and other scriptures. Hence, it would not make sense for them to say, *Allah has not revealed anything to a mortal* (6:91), because it would contradict their fundamental beliefs.

The answer is: Even though this statement contradicts their system of

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1 According to the first meaning, the word *fī* (in, into) is assumed as an implied omitted preposition, and "book" refers to the letters or concepts that are contained *in* the parchment. According to the second meaning, "book" refers to the very parchment. (Trans.)

beliefs, they might have still said it because of one of the following considerations: (1) out of their intense animosity against Islam; (2) in order to entice the polytheists against the Muslims; or (3) in response to a question from the polytheists about the truth of the Prophet's claim that God has revealed the Qur'an to him. Indeed they preferred the polytheists among Arabs over Muslim monotheists by saying: *These [polytheists] are better guided in the path than those who believe* (4:51). Thus they preferred the defilement of polytheism over the purity of monotheism, even though their own religion was based on monotheism. They were such that God says about them: *Have you not seen those to whom a portion of the Book has been given? They believe in idols and false deities and say of those who disbelieve: These are better guided in the path than those who believe* (4:51).

They made an even more foolish statement than this out of enmity against the Christians by saying that Abraham was a Jew. Thus God revealed: *O People of the Book! Why do you dispute about Abraham, when the Torah and the Gospel were not revealed till after him; do you not then understand?... Abraham was not a Jew nor a Christian but he was (an) upright (man), a Muslim, and he was not one of the polytheists* (3:65-67). Likewise, the Qur'an has narrated other statements from them that contradict their established principles. It is quite possible for people with such conduct and behavior to deny the revelation of scriptures to human beings altogether out of some evil consideration and disposition. It is perceivable that such people would deny a truth that would be harmful and costly to them, or preach a falsehood that would be beneficial and profitable to them.

Another objection raised by some exegetes is that the Qur'an did not address the People of the Book in its Meccan chapters. When the Prophet was in Mecca before his migration to Medina, his religious call was directed at the polytheists because they were the people living there and causing trouble for Islam.

The answer is: This point does not mean that the People of the Book were left aside in Mecca altogether. There are a few reasons for this: (1) Islam claimed from day one to be a universal religion and made its call to all people. The Qur'an was sent as a reminder for all nations from the beginning. (2) The polytheists [in Mecca] and the People of the Book [in Arabia] were neighbors; they used to meet and interact with each other consistently. (3) Some Meccan chapters mention the People of the Book,

and there is no clear evidence to show that these verses were revealed later in Medina. For example God says: *And do not dispute with the followers of the Book except by what is best, except those of them who act unjustly* (29:46); *And for those who were Jews We prohibited what We have related to you already, and We did them no injustice, but they were unjust to themselves* (16:118). Similarly, Chapter 7 (al-Aʿrāf) mentions a series of aberrations committed by the Israelites even though the chapter is Meccan. (4) The call to Islam was made several years before the migration and there were many Jewish and Christian communities in the Arabian Peninsula at the time. It is very unlikely that this call did not reach them during this entire period, or that it reached them but they did not respond to it—whether positively or negatively. After all, a community of Muslims migrated at that time to Ethiopia and recited the Meccan Chapter 19 (Maryam) to the people there, which talks about the story of Jesus and his prophethood.

Another objection raised by some exegetes is that this entire chapter—that is, Sūrah al-Anʿām—was revealed to argue against the polytheists concerning God's unity. All of the addresses made in the chapter are directed to them, which leaves no grounds for saying that the pronoun "they"—in *when they say: Allah has not revealed anything to a mortal* (6:91)—refers to the Jews. Rather, it certainly refers to the Arab polytheists, because this verse is in a series of verses which talk about them, as opposed to the Jews of whom there was no mention in the chapter. We cannot assume that this one verse is an exception to the flow, theme and context of the chapter from its beginning up to this point—and afterwards until the end. There is no rational evidence or authenticated narration to support this interpretation. Hence, it is best to prefer the recitation of *yajʿalūnahu* in the third person, referring to the Jews who made the book into parchment. This would be a reference to the Jews while addressing the Arab polytheists.

The answer is: It is true that the previous verses argue against the polytheists, but they do not argue against them per se, as specific individuals. Whenever the Qur'an addresses a person or group, it addresses them because of a specific *quality* in them. Otherwise, the Qur'anic addresses are never personal. In this case, the chapter addresses the polytheists because of their defiance against the truth and their rejection of the principal components of the religious call, which are monotheism, prophethood, and the afterlife. In light of this point, the audience of these verses would be

anyone who denies all or some of these principal beliefs. Thus it is perfectly compatible with the theme and flow of the chapter to describe some of the aberrations of the Jews if these aberrations necessitate the rejection of prophethood and revelation of scripture. This would be completely consonant with the deviations of the polytheists who denied the principal beliefs of God's religion, even though it pertains to a community other than the polytheists and idol-worshipers. Perhaps the Jews used to teach this to the polytheists in order to cause mischief. There are some historical accounts saying that sometimes the polytheists used to ask the Jews about the Prophet's message, and sometimes they would even send entire delegations [to Medina] to discuss this issue with the Jews.[1] In addition, there are two statements in the verse that cannot be properly addressed to anyone other than the Jews: (1) *And you were taught what you did not know, (neither) you nor your fathers*; and (2) *Say: Who revealed the Book which Moses brought, a light and guidance for the people*.

Some exegetes have responded the above objection as follows: Even though the polytheists did not *believe* in the Torah as a divine book, they nevertheless *knew* that the Jews followed the Torah as something that was revealed to Moses. This knowledge and familiarity suffices for the sake of the argument here.

However, the idea that the polytheists *knew* the Jews to be followers of the Torah of Moses cannot be a satisfactory explanation of the verse because the mere knowledge of this does not make it binding on the person to accept the Torah as God's revelation, especially that the verse describes it as a light and guidance for the people. *Believing* that it has been revealed by God is not the same as *knowing* that the Jews claim this. Only the former would explain the verse, not the latter.

If the verse is recited with *yajʿalūnahu* [in third person], then it should be interpreted as a rhetorical shift of address; otherwise the rest of the verse is directed at the Jews [in second person]: *Who revealed the Book which Moses brought… And you were taught what you did not know, (neither) you nor your fathers* (6:91).

Here is a summary of how one of the exegetes has accommodated both recitations [that is, *tajʿalūnahu* and *yajʿalūnahu*] in order to show that there is no problem in the verse being addressed to the polytheists:

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1 This was at a time when the Jews were predominantly in Medina, and the Prophet and the polytheists were in Mecca. (Trans.)

The verse was initially revealed in a Meccan chapter with "which *they* make into parchment" (*yajʿalūnahu*) in the third person, as recited by Ibn Kathīr and Abū ʿAmrw. This was an argument addressed to the polytheists in Mecca. They were denying revelation on the account that it is unlikely for God to speak to a mortal, yet they admitted to the book of Moses and would send delegations to Jewish scholars, acknowledging them as followers of the first divine book who know the stories of the prophets.

That is why God told His Prophet to argue against these people who *have not measured Allah with His due measure when they say: Allah has not revealed anything to a mortal*. For example they used to say: *What! Has Allah raised up a mortal to be a messenger?* (17:94). The Prophet was ordered to tell them: *Who revealed the Book which Moses brought as a light*—which illuminated the darkness of disbelief and polytheism which the Children of Israel had inherited from the Egyptians—*and as guidance for the people*, meaning those who learnt divine laws and rituals through the Torah. As a result, the Israelites were followers of the Torah's light and guidance until they disagreed about it and *they neglected a portion of what they were reminded of* (5:13). Hence, due to following their own desires and interests, *they make it into parchment that they show* if it serves their interests, and of which *they conceal much* that goes against their desires.

Apparently this is how the verse was recited in Mecca and also in Medina, until the incident where Jewish scholars [in Medina] concealed the law of lapidation [in favor of a married person who has committed adultery]. Likewise, they concealed the news about the coming of the Prophet in the Torah, to the point that some of them said: *Allah has not revealed anything to a mortal*, just as the polytheists had said it before them—assuming that the accounts of these events are authentic. Then it makes sense that God inspired His Messenger to recite these sentences in presence of the Jews and address them [in the second person]: *which you make into parchment that you show while you conceal much*, without abrogating the initial recitation [in third person]. Nor does this ruin the consistent flow of the previous verses [because the second recitation belongs to an event in Medina that was independent of the previous verses].

This is a plausible explanation based on the above-mentioned events, which allows for both recitations without requiring any contrivance. It answers all of the problems and objections that the exegetes have raised against the recitation of both versions of the verse.

However, even if we assume this possibility, the following problems still remain unanswered:

(1) It does not make sense to argue against the polytheists [in Mecca] through something that they did not believe in.

(2) It does not make sense to address a non-Jewish audience [in Mecca]: *And you were taught what you did not know, (neither) you nor your fathers* (6:91) as we discussed above.

(3) There is no reason to interpret "people" in *a light and guidance for the people* as the Jews alone.

(4) By admitting that the Jews in Medina said, *Allah has not revealed anything to a mortal*, the exegete is conceding and falling into what he was trying to avoid.

(5) Moreover, there is no proof for the claim that God "inspired" His Messenger to recite the verse a second time to the Jews [in Medina] as: *which you make into parchment that you show while you conceal much* [this time in second person]. What does "inspiration" mean here? (a) If it means a new revelation, with the difference that the verse was first revealed in the third person and then again in the second person, then it would mean that the verse was revealed twice: the first time it was revealed as part of the chapter, and the second in Medina without being part of the chapter.[1] (b) If "inspiration" does not mean revelation through Gabriel, then it would not be part of the Qur'an, and its recitation would not be a recitation of the Qur'an.[2] (c) It could means that God made His Messenger to understand somehow that this verse—which was revealed in Mecca—can be recited in both the second person and the third person, meaning that both recitations are correct and intended by God. This view is held by those who claim that all the different recitations of the Qur'an were either recited *by* the Prophet or recited *to* him [with his consent]. However, this view clearly suffers from all of the problems that we listed above.

It should be noted that the above discussions are based on the assumption that the verse was revealed in Mecca. Otherwise, if the verse was revealed in Medina [after the rest of the chapter] then most of the above issues would not be applicable.

… And you were taught what you did not know, (neither) you nor your fathers…: This sentence is not about ordinary knowledge of what is

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1 This is obviously not the case and not claimed by anyone. (Trans.)

2 This contradicts an assumption behind the entire discussion above. (Trans.)

beneficial and what is harmful in human life, which can be learnt through the faculties that humans generally have, such as the physical senses, imagination and reason. Instead, the knowledge that "they were taught which neither they nor their fathers knew" should be interpreted in light of the verse's argument. The verse's claim is that an implication of being a god is to guide humankind to their happiness by sending revelation and scripture to some of them. However, there is no relevance between this conclusion and the ordinary forms of knowledge that people can acquire through means that are already built in them. Similarly, the verse is not about God making people know what they did not know previously, as indicated by verses like: *And He gave you hearing and sight and hearts* (16:78) and: *He Who taught (to write) with the pen; He taught man what he knew not* (96:4-5). The context of the verse does not support this meaning.

Hence, the verse is about extraordinary teachings that cannot be acquired through the cognitive capacity and instruments of humans in general. This is naught but what God has revealed to His prophets and His carriers of revelation, whether in the form of scripture or not. This knowledge consists of religious beliefs, laws, and codes of conduct that are not accessible through the normal means that are available to humans.

This should clarify that the audience here—in *And you were taught what you did not know…*—are not the polytheists. They did not admit to possessing any clear share of prophetic teachings and divine laws. Even the pieces that they had inherited from the prophetic traditions of their forefathers were not things that they acknowledged; hence the verse cannot set these teachings as a basis for argument. Rather, God has described them as being ignorant, where He says: *And those who have no knowledge say: Why does not Allah speak to us?* (2:118).

Given the above, this sentence cannot be addressed to the polytheists. Nor can it be addressed to the Muslims, because of the following reasons: (1) The verse involves a tone of debate and a theme of argumentation. If this sentence were directed at the Muslims, then it would be a parenthetical remark aside from the context of argumentation, while there is no clear reason to have such an aside. (2) That would entail a shift of audience—from *Who revealed the Book which Moses brought* to another audience in *and you were taught…*—while there is no clear indication for such a shift, not to mention that it would be confusing. Hence, the sentence is directed to neither the polytheists nor the Muslims, but to the Jews who are the audience of the first part of the verse.

The Jews claimed that *Allah has not revealed anything to a mortal*,

either out of animosity or in order to cause mischief. In this verse God argues against them in two ways:

(1) He points out their belief in the Torah as a book that Moses brought as a light and guidance for the people. This contradicts their claim that *Allah has not revealed anything to a mortal.* This is a destructive argument by contradiction. God then goes on to criticize them for breaking this book into pieces, of which they show some but conceal much.

(2) He tells them: "You were taught things that were not in your capacity to learn on your own, nor was it in the capacity of your fathers to learn and hand down to you." These are things like religious beliefs, moral virtues, and legal codes and rules which are meant to settle disagreements in human societies by giving them the best order, balance and organization. These teachings, especially the legal codes, are things that human beings cannot acquire through their own intellection. It is true that they can acquire some general religious beliefs concerning God's unity, prophethood and the hereafter, as well as an overall understanding of moral virtues, but this does not suffice to establish these teachings in human societies. Mere knowledge of something is different from its practice and its widespread implementation at the social level. The strong drive to enjoy material pleasures and the natural instinct to employ everything in order to fully exercise one's desires and acquire one's cravings leave no room for humankind to search for the treasures of divine realities and gnosis that are latent in their innate nature (*fiṭrah*). Thus these realities remain buried and do not become a foundation for human life. This is especially the case if this sense of materialism becomes a dominant trend and establishes a foothold in the entire society. Then the society becomes a closed setting and environment that limits the people to material enjoyment, without any opening for the light of human virtues to penetrate it. Any spiritual values and moral virtues inherited by this society will gradually disappear in such an environment, until the entire society turns into a primitive animalistic society as we observe in the advanced societies today, which have plunged into materialism and submitted to sensual pleasures. Thus every second of their life is occupied by such matters and they are completely inattentive of the hereafter and spiritual matters due to being totally engaged in the life of this world. This has blocked them from any thought or contemplation about how to achieve a happy eternal life.

There is no historical record of a ruler or politician in any nation or

community who called its subjects to moral human virtues, pure divine teachings and the way of *taqwá* (Godwariness, self-restraint, piety) and servitude (*ʿubūdiyyah*) [to God]. In case of totalitarian rulers, their sole concern is to keep themselves in power and maintain their reign. And in case of collective governments such as democracies and the like, their greatest achievement is to organize the society according to what the majority desires—irrespective of that being a virtue or a vice; whether it is in line with true happiness as judged by sound reason or not. Sometimes these nations contravene certain spiritual values and noble human virtues which still remain in name among the people, and which are valued and respected by the innate human nature—such as justice, modesty, honesty, benevolence, philanthropy, and kindness to the disadvantaged. When they want to violate these values, they interpret them according to their own course of action and common practices, as we can see with our own eyes today.

In short, our collective reason and material rationality—which rule our societies—cannot lead us to these divine teachings and spiritual virtues, the names of which have always been present in human societies, and the meanings of which people have ever cherished—despite all differences of opinion and varieties of culture. After all, there is a far distance between clinging to the earth and rising from matter and materiality toward the heaven.

What exists is only traces and remainders of religious calls which go back to the movements and struggles of the prophets to spread the call of truth, disseminate monotheism, and guide humankind to their true felicity in this life and the next. We owe these guidelines to God's teaching through revelation and scriptures.

… And you were taught what you did not know, (neither) you nor your fathers…: This statement argues against the Jews and refutes their claim that: *Allah has not revealed anything to a mortal* (6:91). The argument is that you have some beneficial knowledge that you have not acquired yourselves, nor have you inherited from your forefathers. Rather, you were taught these through another means, which is the way of revelation and scripture sent from God upon some human being. Therefore, God has sent some true teachings—including religious beliefs and legal codes—upon some mortal. The Jews had indeed a large share of these teachings which they had inherited from their prophets and the book of Moses.

Even though the verse first talks about *the Book which Moses brought* specifically, the subsequent part does not say, "you were taught *by it*" or "God taught you *through it*." Instead, it says: *you were taught* without qualifying it by the Torah. This, along with our explanation above, shows that this part of the verse—*and you were taught what you did not know*—refers to any religious belief and law that is rooted in revelation and scripture in an absolute sense, not only the teachings of Torah as some exegetes have suggested. The unconditional text of the verse does not support such a restriction of meaning.

The verse says, *you were taught* in the passive voice. According to some exegetes, this better proves the verse's objective because identifying the subject here would make the argument more like a vicious circle. The verse is effectively saying: "Among what you know there is some knowledge which you did not acquire by yourselves or through your fathers. Who has taught you these?" The verse then says, "Allah" as the answer to both of the questions in this verse.

… Say: Allah. Then leave them sporting in their vain discourse: When the answer to some question is obvious and undoubtable, the inquirer does not wait for the inquired to respond, but proceeds to answer it himself. That is why God orders His Prophet to take on the task of answering by telling him: *Say: Allah.* It means God is the One Who *revealed the Book which Moses brought,* and the One Who taught you *what you did not know, (neither) you nor your fathers.*

The claim that *Allah has not revealed anything to a mortal* is vain and frivolous speech. Only those who take the truth as an object of sport and entertainment would make such a claim. This is especially true if the speakers are Jews who believe in the Torah of Moses and take pride in having knowledge of revelation and scripture. That is why God orders His Prophet to leave them with their affair: *then leave them sporting in their vain discourse.*

وَ هذا كِتابٌ أَنْزَلْناهُ مُبارَكٌ مُصَدِّقُ الَّذِی بَیْنَ یَدَیْهِ وَ لِتُنْذِرَ أُمَّ الْقُری وَ مَنْ حَوْلَها وَ الَّذِینَ یُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ یُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَ هُمْ عَلی صَلاتِهِمْ یُحافِظُونَ ﴿۹۲﴾

(6:92) And this is a Book We have revealed, blessed, verifying that which was before it, and that you may warn the Mother of Cities and those around her; and those who believe in the hereafter believe in it, and they

keep a guard on their prayers.

The last verse established the following points: (1) An implication of being a god is to send revelation upon a subset of human beings, which are called prophets. (2) There have been some true scriptures such as the Torah of Moses. (3) There is knowledge of other things that humankind has been taught, which only trace back to divine revelation and supernatural teachings. This verse continues the discussion by adding that this Qur'an is also a divine book which God has sent, just like the other divine scriptures. The verse's evidence for this claim is that this Book has the same qualities that are found in other books sent from God.

Given the above, the following points should be clear: (1) The theme of the verse is to identify God as the Sender of the Qur'an. The verse is not primarily concerned with the receiver of the Qur'an. That is why it says: *a Book We have revealed*, without saying, "We have revealed *to you*"—unlike other verses such as: *(It is) a Book We have revealed to you abounding in good that they may ponder over its verses* (38:29). (2) The qualities mentioned for the Book—in *blessed, verifying*—serve as reasons to prove it as God's revelation. To be more precise, they are not proofs, but they are signs and indications (*amārāt*) of a book that has been sent by God.

One indication of such a book is that it is blessed (*mubārak*), meaning that God has placed abundant and sustainable good in it. It guides the people *to that which is most upright* (17:9) and: *With it Allah guides him who will follow His pleasure into the ways of safety* (5:16). It benefits the people in this world by resolving their disputes, giving them strength, uniting them, abolishing animosity from their hearts and rancor from their souls, spreading peace and security among them, making their lives prosperous and enjoyable, enlightening them against ignorance and every vice, and bringing them under the shade of true happiness. It also benefits them in the hereafter through great reward and eternal bliss.

This book could not have any of these blessings had it not been sent from God. For example, it could be a human fabrication made as a snare to deceive and entrap the people. It could be a satanic impression or an appealing imagination of one's ego which one takes to be the word of God and divine revelation, while that is not the case. Either way, none of these divine blessings and abundant benefits could accrue from any other book, because the path of evil does not lead its traveler to anything but evil, and perfection never grows out of corruption. God says: *Surely Allah*

does not guide one whom He leads astray (16:37); *And Allah does not guide the iniquitous people* (61:5); *And as for the good land, its vegetation springs forth (abundantly) by the permission of its Lord, but (as for) that which is inferior (its herbage) comes forth but scantily* (7:58).

Another indication of such a book is that it speaks the truth and verifies the previous scriptures which were truly sent by God.

Another indication of such a book is that it fulfills God's objective vis-à-vis His servants, which is to guide them to happiness in both this world and the next. He achieves this objective through warning them and sending revelation to them, as we see in the next part of the verse.

… and that you may warn* (li-tundhira) *the Mother of Cities* (umm al-qurá) *and those around her…: Umm al-Qurá (lit. "mother of cities, metropolis") refers to the holy precinct of Mecca. Since the verse then adds, *and those around her*, what is meant by "Mecca" here is "the people of Mecca." *Those around her* are all people across the globe, in the sense that their lands surround Mecca. It has also been interpreted as the neighboring lands of Mecca. This statement shows God's special regard and attention for Umm al-Qurá, which is the holy sanctuary where the religious call was first made and whence it spread.

There are two possibilities for the conjunction "and" in *and that you may warn the Mother of Cities*: (1) it adds to *blessed*; (2) it adds to *verifying*. Some exegetes have favored the first possibility, where the meaning would be: "We have revealed it that you may warn the Mother of Cities and those around her." However, the second possibility is more likely because the Qur'an's verification of the previous scriptures was also one of the purposes of its revelation.[1] Then the implied meaning, as stated by al-Zamakhsharī, would be: "We have revealed this Book so that it may verify that which was before it, and that you may warn the Mother of Cities." This possibility is further strengthened if the word is recited as *li-yundhira* in third person (lit. "that *it* may warn…").[2]

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1 Thus *muṣaddiq* (verifying) should be joined with *li-tundhira*, where the letter *lām* (that, so that, in order to; indicating purpose, *ghāyah*) would also apply to *muṣaddiq*. (Trans.)

2 The difference between the two views is where *verifying* would stand: in the first case it is bundled with *blessed*; in the second case it is joined with *that you may warn*. In the first case the meaning would be: "We have revealed a blessed and verifying book so that you may warn…" In the second case the

… and those who believe in the hereafter believe in it…: This sentence is like a conclusion that is made from the qualities of the Book which God described above. That is: "Since this is a blessed Book which We have revealed—which verifies that which was before it, and which is sent in order to warn the people of the earth—the believers in the hereafter believe in it, for indeed it calls to eternal security and cautions them against everlasting chastisement."

God then identifies who these believers in the hereafter are by stating a quality that is exclusive to them: *and they keep a guard on their prayers*. The prayer is their worship in which they remember their Lord. We see the same quality twice in Sūrah al-Muʾminūn, at the beginning and end of the list of qualities mentioned for the believers: *Who are humble in their prayer* (23:2) and: *And those who keep a guard on their prayers* (23:9).

The connection between these verses suggests that "keeping a guard on prayer" means "being humble in prayer," which refers to an inner state of subservience and meekness before God's magnificence as one stands in a position of servitude. A more common interpretation, however, is that "keeping a guard on prayer" refers to being attentive of prayer times.

Discussion on the Meaning of "Blessedness" (*Barakah*) in the Qur'an

Al-Rāghib says in *al-Mufradāt*:

> The root meaning of *bark* means "camel's chest" although the root is also used in other meanings. "This camel has *birkah*" means that it has a wide chest. *Baraka al-baʿīr* means that the camel sat on its knees [whereby its chest is placed on the ground]. An implication of this [sitting of the camel] is that it becomes stable, fixed and settled. This implication is what is sometimes meant when the root is used. For example it is said: *ibtarikū fī al-ḥarb*, meaning "stay at and adhere to your position in the battle." The place in the battlefield where warriors stay at is called *barākāʾ* and *barūkāʾ al-ḥarb*. *Ibtarakat al-dābbah* means that the animal stopped [and thus became fixed and settled]. *Burūk* means the same. *Birkah* (pond, pool, reservoir) is a place that holds water. *Barakah* (blessing) means "sustained and fixed good that God

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meaning would be: "We have revealed a blessed book so that it may verify and so that you (or it) may warn…" (Trans.)

> places in something." God says: *We would certainly have opened up for them blessings* (barakāt) *from the heaven and the earth* (7:96). These blessings are called *barakāt* (plural of *barakah*) because of the aspect of fixedness and stability of good in them, just like the fixedness and stability of water in a pond (*birkah*). *Mubārak* (blessed) means "that in which good is established." This is what is meant in the verse: *And this is a blessed* (mubārak) *reminder which We have revealed* (21:50)…
>
> Now, God's good is rooted in the unseen, cannot be measured, and is unlimited. Therefore, [even though *barakah* primarily means divine good,] sometimes *mubārak* and *barakah* are used for any non-physical abundance. This sense [of immaterial abundance] is what is meant in the narration, "No charity reduces from wealth." Upon hearing this, a loser said: "Let the scale judge between us!" However, the narration does not refer to apparent and visible reduction.…
>
> God is called *tabāraka* (blessed), which refers to the exclusivity of all good to Him.

Given the above, the reality of *barakah* is "established good in something." Here are some examples of this: (1) Having *barakah* in progeny means having abundant descendants, or having one's [good] name remain through one's descendants. (2) Having *barakah* in food means feeding a large number of people to satiation. (3) Having *barakah* in time means being able to perform a task in a timespan that it is not typically doable in.

Meanwhile, in the context of religion, goals and objectives are strictly restricted to either spiritual happiness or worldly achievements that result in eternal happiness in the hereafter [as opposed to transient material endowments]. Therefore, the *barakah* (blessing) of material things is the spiritual good that is either found directly in them, or that ensues from them. For example, when the angels descended upon Abraham they told him: *The mercy of Allah and His blessings are on you, O people of the house* (11:73), where God's "blessings" (*barakāt*) can refer to a variety of spiritual goods such as religion and divine proximity, as well as worldly goods such as wealth, extensive progeny, and persistence of one's remembrance—all of which would again reduce to spiritual goods.

If something has *barakah*, it means that it fulfills the benefit that is desired from it and brings about the good that is sought in it. This makes

barakah relative: it differs according to one's objective and expectation of things. For example, there are several possible objectives that can be expected from food, such as: (1) to satiate hunger; (2) to not harm the eater; (3) to cure someone or make the person healthy; (4) to become spiritual light in the soul and help the person serve God. The *barakah* of food in each case would be the establishment of the respective good in it. This can occur if God gathers the different causes and factors of that good congruously and removes its impediments.

This should clarify that when God gives *barakah* to something and establishes good in it, it does not cancel the rest of causes and factors that affect it. As we have repeatedly said before, when God wills a quality or condition in something, it does not annul the entire system of causes and effects which govern that thing. That would be the case if God's will (*irādah*) stands in a parallel or horizontal (*ʿarḍī*) position compared to the other means and causes. But that is not true. Instead, God's will has a vertical or longitudinal (*ṭūlī*) relationship with other means and causes.[1] For example, when God sends *barakah* upon food, it means that He *aligns* the different relevant factors in such a way that the person does not suffer any harm from eating that food. Similarly, His *barakah* in wealth is that He sets the different factors in line with each other, such that the wealth is not wasted, lost, stolen, plundered and so on. It does not mean that He annuls the rest of the means and causes, and instead takes charge of creating the desired good in that thing without the involvement of any intermediaries. The reader should reflect on this.

The concept of *barakah* (blessing) has been repeatedly used in various forms in several verses of the Holy Qur'an, as it has also been used frequently in hadith. Similarly, we see this term used frequently in the two Testaments, where God blesses certain prophets, or some priests bless certain individuals. In fact, giving *barakah* is an ongoing custom in the Old Testament.

The above should clarify the error of those who deny the truth behind

1 In other words, the other means and causes all fall under God's will and are themselves caused by it. Causation in metaphysics means existentiation (that is, giving existence). Therefore, all means, factors and forces in the universe are channels for God's will to descend, act and materialize. The only giver of existence is God, and calling anything else a "cause" (*ʿillah*, *sabab*) is an inaccurate expression in the metaphysical sense of the term. (Trans.)

barakah. We read about one of these deniers in what we quoted from al-Rāghib above. Their argument against *barakah* is that the working of natural causes in things leaves no room for any other cause to have another impact or to undo their impact. Their error is that they have failed to realize that God's impact on things takes causal precedence over the other causes. It is not another cause on the same plane, so it is not applicable to talk about interference, annulment, obstruction and so on.

وَ مَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِباً أَوْ قالَ أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ وَ لَمْ يُوحَ إِلَيْهِ شَيْءٌ وَ مَنْ قالَ سَأُنْزِلُ مِثْلَ ما أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ وَ لَوْ تَرى إِذِ الظَّالِمُونَ فِي غَمَراتِ الْمَوْتِ وَ الْمَلائِكَةُ باسِطُوا أَيْدِيهِمْ أَخْرِجُوا أَنْفُسَكُمُ الْيَوْمَ تُجْزَوْنَ عَذابَ الْهُونِ بِما كُنْتُمْ تَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ وَ كُنْتُمْ عَنْ آياتِهِ تَسْتَكْبِرُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾

(6:93) And who is more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah, or says: It has been revealed to me; while nothing has been revealed to him, and he who says: I will reveal the like of what Allah has revealed? And if you had seen when the unjust shall be in the agonies of death and the angels stretching out their hands: Give up your souls; today shall you be recompensed with an ignominious chastisement because you spoke against Allah other than the truth and (because) you showed pride toward His communications.

This verse lists three forms of wrongdoing that rank highest in terms of injustice. No sound intellect would doubt their enormity and abomination, and that is why they are presented in form of a rhetorical question.

The verse effectively invites the audience to settle with the rule of sound intellect, be fair, and submit to explicit truth. It says to the Prophet: "Tell them that both I and you should not defy the truth and should not transgress against God by committing the greatest and most heinous injustice, which is injustice with regards to God. So how can you forge a lie against God by claiming that He has associates and referring to them for intercession? And how could I make claims to prophethood and say that 'it has been revealed to me' if I were not truly a prophet to whom God has revealed? And how can someone say that 'I will reveal the like of what Allah has revealed,' when—in doing so—he derides God's rules and mocks His communications?"

The result of these instructions is that the audience would end up

accepting prophethood [of the Prophet Muḥammad]. If they stop forging the false claim of polytheism against God; if one does not vainly claim that *I will reveal the like of what Allah has revealed*; and if the Prophet continues his claim to revelation, then what remains would be his claim without any challenge.

"Forging a lie against God" includes the claim that "it has been revealed to me" while it has not. Therefore it has been said that the second injustice mentioned in the verse is a particular example of the first, which is mentioned separately to show the significance and high status of the subject of revelation. However, if we contemplate the context of the verse and the fact that it is directed at the polytheists, it can be inferred that "forging a lie against God" primarily refers to "assuming partners for God." The whole message of the verse is to encourage fairness and put down the bigotry of the pre-Islamic era (*jāhiliyyah*). Therefore, it does not make sense for the second injustice mentioned in the verse to be a particular example of the first [because that would itself be an unfair way of expression]. The verse only makes a vague and overall reference to its intended meaning without explicitly specifying it in order to not stimulate any bigotry and fanaticism in the audience.

In short, the first and second forms of injustice mentioned in the verse—*he who forges a lie against Allah* and *or says: It has been revealed to me; while nothing has been revealed to him*—differ in terms of their intent, even though it appears that one is a particular example of another. This interpretation is confirmed by what comes next, which threatens the audience with punishment and asks them about their partners and intercessors [that they had assumed besides God, as we shall see in the next verse].

Some exegetes have said that the second form of injustice—*or says: It has been revealed to me; while nothing has been revealed to him*—was revealed in reference to Musaylimah who claimed to be a prophet. However, this does not match the theme of the verse, as we explained above. Rather, this form of injustice apparently refers to the Prophet himself. Of course, the verse still retains its general meaning which is applicable to anyone if we take it by itself and irrespective of its specific context.

We should also add that this chapter is Meccan, while Musaylimah's claim to prophethood occurred after the Prophet's migration to Medina. Those who have offered the above interpretation believe that this verse was revealed in Medina, not Mecca. We shall discuss this view under our

following examination of narrations, by God's will.

… and he who says: I will reveal the like of what Allah has revealed?…: This part of the verse apparently recounts a statement that was actually made at the time. That is, there was someone who claimed that "I shall reveal something similar to what God has revealed." This expression makes mock of the Qur'an as "what God has revealed" because the person claims that "I can also reveal the like of it." Otherwise, [if his claim were concerning the content of the Qur'an,] he should have said: "I will say the like of what Muḥammad has said" or "I will bring to you the like of what he has brought to you."

Some exegetes have said that this claim refers to what is narrated elsewhere from the polytheists: *If we wished we could say the like of it; this is nothing but the fables of the ancients* (8:31).

Others have said that the verse was revealed in Medina about ʿAbd-Allāh b. Saʿd b. Abī Sarḥ, who said, "I reveal the like of what God reveals." Other suggestions have also been made which we shall discuss in our examination of narrations, by God's will. Overall, apparently the verse does not match any of these views. The structure of the claim mentioned in the verse shows that it is a promise concerning the future, while the claim *if we wished…* (8:31) is a conditional statement, and ʿAbd-Allāh's claim—assuming that its narration is authentic—refers to something in the present.

Either way, this third form of injustice—*and he who says: I will reveal the like of what Allah has revealed*—relates a claim that some Arab polytheist made in defiance of God's revelation. It should be noted that the Arabic particle *man* (he who) is repeated for the third type of injustice, but not the second type: *he who* (man) *forges a lie…or says…and he who* (man) *says: I will reveal*…. Based on this point, the three forms of injustice in the verse can be classified under two categories: in the first two types, the person admits and submits to God and His revelation as an overall idea, but in the third type he equates himself with God and denies the truth of divine revelation altogether.

… And if you had seen when the unjust shall be in the agonies* (ghamarāt) *of death and the angels stretching out their hands* (bāsiṭū aydīhim)*: Give up your souls; today shall you be recompensed with an ignominious* (al-hūn) *chastisement because you spoke against Allah other than the truth and (because) you showed pride toward His communications:

The root meaning of *ghamr* is "to cover something and not leave any trace of it." Thus *ghamrah* is used in the following meanings: (1) a great amount of water that covers what is underneath it; (2) total ignorance; and (3) a difficulty that envelops someone. *Ghamarāt* means *shadāʾid* (difficulties, intensities, adversities), as used in this verse: *shall be in the agonies* (ghamarāt) *of death* (6:93). *Hūn* and *hawān* mean *dhillah* (humiliation, dishonor, abasement).

The literal meaning of *basṭ al-yad* is clear [that is: opening, extending or spreading one's hand], but it is often used metaphorically, where its meaning differs according to context. For instance, when it is said that a rich person "stretches out his hand," it refers to his generosity and financial aid toward the needy. If a king "has an open hand," it means that he can govern the affairs of his nation without any conflict or opposition. If a rough and tough agent "extends his hand" toward a culprit who is arrested, it refers to the agent beating and dragging the culprit.

Therefore, *the angels stretching out their hands* refers to the angels starting to punish the wrongdoers. The flow of the verse suggests that the next part of the verse explains what the angels will do with these wrongdoers: *Give up your souls; today shall you be recompensed with an ignominious chastisement*…. In other words, these are the words of the angels, not the words of God. The implied meaning is: "The angels will tell them: Give up your souls…." This means that the angels will capture their souls in a painful way that makes them taste an intense punishment. This is their punishment upon death, when they move from this world to the realm that is beyond. Then they shall have another punishment later upon the Resurrection, as God says elsewhere: *and before them is a barrier until the day they are raised* (23:100).

Given the above, "today" in *today shall you be recompensed* means "the day of their death"—or in other words, the *barzakh* (the intermediate realm between this life and the Resurrection). That is when they will be given the chastisement mentioned in the verse. It should also be clear that "the unjust" refers to those who have committed one of the three greatest forms of injustice that God counted in the first part of the verse: (1) forging a lie against God; (2) falsely claiming to be a prophet; and (3) mocking God's revelation. These three forms of injustice closely tie into the next part of the verse, which explains two reasons for their chastisement. The first reason is: *because you spoke against Allah other than the truth*.

This refers to one who forges a lie against God by attributing a partner to Him, or by falsely ascribing a legal rule or revelation to Him. The second reason is: *and (because) you showed pride toward His communications*. This refers to one *who says: I will reveal the like of what Allah has revealed*.

It also follows that *give up your souls* is an existential or creational command (*al-amr al-takwīnī*),[1] because death and giving up one's soul is not something in one's control so that the person may be ordered [legislatively and authoritatively] to do it. The same is true about life, as the Qur'an says: *It is He Who causes death and gives life* (53:44). Therefore, the command in this verse is an existential one, and the angels are the means and agents that implement it. The command to g*ive up your souls* is meant figuratively as is a metaphorical image: It is as though the human soul is something inside the body through which the body lives; and if it leaves the body, the person will die. This view is according to God's Book, which clearly suggests that the soul is not of the same nature as the body, meaning that it is not physical or material. It is a different form of being, but is united with and attached to the body through some immaterial form of union and attachment. We discussed this in the first volume of this book,[2] and we shall discuss it further under other relevant verses, by God's will. Overall, *give up your souls* refers to the detachment of their souls from their bodies, which marks their death. The context suggests that this is part of the angels' speech [not God's].

The meaning is: "I wish you could see the time when these wrongdoers shall experience the pangs and agonies of death, when the angels will start to chastise them by seizing their spirits firmly and informing them that they shall enter the realm of death, where they will be punished with humiliation and dishonor as their retribution for speaking against God other than the truth and showing pride toward His communications."

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1 A *takwīnī* command is not a command in the everyday sense. It is not an order to be fulfilled by an audience with free will and volition. It rather boils down to the subject's *will* to create a being or action, where the subject's will suffices for its fulfilment and actualization. A clear example of it is the creative command "Be" (*kun*) by which the thing comes to being, as mentioned in verses 2:117, 3:47, 3:59, 6:73, 16:40, 19:35, 36:82 and 40:68. (Trans.)

2 This is in volume 2 of the English translation, pp. 221ff, under verses 2:153-157, titled "A Philosophical Discussion on Immateriality of the Soul." (Trans.)

وَ لَقَدْ جِئْتُمُونا فُرادى كَما خَلَقْناكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَ تَرَكْتُمْ ما خَوَّلْناكُمْ وَراءَ ظُهُورِكُمْ وَ ما نَرى مَعَكُمْ شُفَعاءَكُمُ الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُمْ أَنَّهُمْ فِيكُمْ شُرَكاءُ لَقَدْ تَقَطَّعَ بَيْنَكُمْ وَ ضَلَّ عَنْكُمْ ما كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ ﴿٩٤﴾

(6:94) And certainly you have come to Us alone **(furādá)** *as We created you at first, and you have left behind your backs the things which We gave you* **(khawwalnākum, from takhwīl)**, *and We do not see with you your intercessors about whom you asserted that they were (Allah's) associates in respect to you; certainly the ties between you are now cut off and what you asserted is gone from you.*

Furādá is the plural of *fard* (individual, alone, single), which means "someone or something that is detached from mixing with others in some aspect." Its opposite is *zawj* (pair, couple, joined), which means "someone or something that is mixed with others." The two are respectively similar in meaning to *witr* (odd, solo) and *shafᶜ* (even), because *witr* is "that which is not attached to something else," while *shafᶜ* is "that which is attached to something else." *Takhwīl* means "to give someone possession, authority and control over some wealth or the like."

What is meant by "intercessors" in this verse is the lords that they used to worship besides God in order to intercede for them before God. They assumed them to be God's partners in His creation so that they may intercede for them. This verse talks about the reality of human life, which will become evident to them when they return to their Lord by death. At that point they will behold the reality of themselves: that their life and all their affairs have ever been subject to God's direction alone, just as they were when they were first created. They adopted partners for God in order to intercede for them; they spent their life trying to secure various means and connections for themselves; and they endeavored to back and strengthen themselves by their wealth, children, spouses, relatives and communities. However, at that point they will realize that all these things which they used to seek were futile thoughts and false illusions without any impact in the realm of creation whatsoever.

Humankind is a part of the universe like any other part: they are all under God's direction, moving toward the end that God has set for them. Nothing has any influence or say in God's direction and facilitation of affairs except as a means or factor whose impact traces back to Him,

without the thing having any independent impact of its own.

The thing is that once human beings are created and come to existence, they see the adornment of this world, take note of the apparent means and intercessors that seem to be at work, and are attracted to the pleasures of life. Thus their souls become attached to these pleasures, and in order to reach these pleasures, they chase after the apparent means of this life and become subservient to them. This distracts them from turning their attention to the Creator and Facilitator of these means, Who is the Cause of the causes and the Director of all affairs. As a result, they deem these apparent means to be independent in their impact, and their only concern and objective becomes achieving the pleasures of this material life by submitting to the apparent system of means and instruments which seems to govern this world. This is how their entire life in this world is spent playing and sporting with these illusions and imaginations, all because of their carnal souls that are so fascinated with the glamor of the material life. Hence their life is immersed in playing with false illusions which distract them from the truth. This is what God says: *And this life of the world is nothing but a sport and a play* (29:64).

Based on the teachings of the Qur'an, when people take off the robe of servitude [to God], they forget their Lord, which in turn leads them to forget themselves. The Qur'an says: *those who forgot Allah, so He made them forgot their own souls: these it is that are the transgressors* (59:19).

When the soul leaves the body at death, the person will be disconnected from all material means, causes and instruments to which he was linked through his body and was connected to in this life. At that point the person will see how the presumed independence, grandeur and influence of these means all fade away. There he will realize that his affair from the beginning to end was up to nobody and nothing but his Lord. He will learn that has no lord other than God, and no one else has any influence on him.

Given the above explanations, the verse can be interpreted as follows:

And certainly you have come to Us alone as We created you at first…: This part expresses the fact of the matter [about the creation and reality of humans].

… and you have left behind your backs the things which We gave you…: This refers to the annulment of the means which engage the person from his Lord as he is busy with them from the onset of his creation until when he is captured upon death and taken to his Lord.

… certainly the ties between you are now cut off and what you asserted is gone from you: This explains why the person is severed from the means and why they cease to have any impact of their own. It is because of an unveiling for the person, whereby he will realize that the presumed means which he was busy playing with throughout his life were nothing but false illusions.

Thus it should be clear that the apparent means and accessories in human life have no share of reality other than toys that people play with, and illusions that occupy their lives.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ فالِقُ الْحَبِّ وَ النَّوى يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَ مُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتِ مِنَ الْحَيِّ ذلِكُمُ اللَّهُ فَأَنَّى تُؤْفَكُونَ ﴿٩٥﴾

(6:95) Surely Allah is the Splitter* (fāliq, from falq) *of the grain and the date-stone [to germinate]; He brings forth the living from the dead and He is the bringer forth of the dead from the living; that is Allah! How are you then turned away.

Falq is synonymous with *shaqq* (to split, to crack). The last verse said that the apparent means in this world are not independent in their impact, and the lords which people have taken are not intercessors so that people may worship them besides God. This verse moves on to say that these things which have preoccupied the people are nothing but creatures of God that are subject to His direction. They have no impact or action that improves human life and leads to the goal of their creation except by God's measurement and direction. God, and only God, is the sole director of all affairs in the universe; hence there is no lord other than Him.

God is the One Who splits the grain and stones, which then grow into plants and trees that feed the people with seeds and fruits. He is the One Who brings forth the living from the dead and the dead from the living. We discussed what this means under verse 3:27.[1] This is God and no one else! So what turns you away?! Until when will you be diverted from the truth toward falsehood?

فالِقُ الْإِصْباحِ وَ جَعَلَ اللَّيْلَ سَكَناً وَ الشَّمْسَ وَ الْقَمَرَ حُسْباناً ذلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ ﴿٩٦﴾

1 See volume 5 of the English translation, pp. 197ff. (Trans.)

(6:96) Splitter of the dawn* (al-iṣbāḥ)*; and He has made the night for rest* (sakanan)*, and the sun and the moon for reckoning* (ḥusbānan)*; this is an arrangement of the Mighty, the Knowing.

Iṣbāḥ here means *ṣubḥ* (morning, dawn), but it is originally an infinitive (to dawn, to start the morning). *Sakan* is "where one rests." *Ḥusbān* is the plural of *ḥisāb* (measurement, count, calculation). It has also been defined as an infinitive that means "to count, to calculate." The conjunction "and" in *and He has made the night for rest* joins the sentence to *splitter of the dawn*. This is a permissible conjunction even though the first part of the verse [s*plitter of the dawn*] has no verb unlike the second part [*He has made the night for rest*] because the first part effectively has a verbal meaning [that is, "He causes the dawn to break"]. The second part has also been recited as "and the Maker (*jāʿil*) of the night…."[1]

The verse mentions a few things: (1) the splitting of the dawn; (2) making the night for rest, when animals rest from their activity to recover their lost energy and discharge the weariness, lassitude and fatigue that they have accumulated due to their daily activity; (3) making the sun and the moon a means of reckoning because we can discern nights, days, months and years based on their movements which are visible to us. These resemble an astonishing arrangement and measurement of things in a world that is constantly subject to change and movement. These signs facilitate and give order to the life of humankind. This is why the verse ends by saying: *this is an arrangement of the Mighty, the Knowing*. Since He is Mighty, nothing can overcome Him and ruin how He regulates the affairs. Since He is Knowledgeable, He is not ignorant of any requirement for the well-functioning of His kingdom, such that His system may fall apart and cease to continue.

وَ هُوَ الَّذِی جَعَلَ لَکُمُ النُّجُومَ لِتَهْتَدُوا بِها فِی ظُلُماتِ الْبَرِّ وَ الْبَحْرِ قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْآیاتِ لِقَوْمٍ یَعْلَمُونَ ﴿۹۷﴾

(6:97) And He it is Who has made the stars for you that you might follow the right way thereby in the darkness of the land and the sea; truly We have elaborated the signs* (al-āyāt) *for a people who know.

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1 In this case, *fāliq* and *jāʿil* in the first two parts of the verse would be consistent because they are both nouns. The first two parts of the verse would then be both nominal sentences. (Trans.)

The meaning of the verse is clear. The elaboration of *āyāt* (signs, communications) can have two meanings: (1) providing detailed signs in the realm of creation (*takwīn*); or (2) explaining communications in detail [where communications would be verbal signs of God].

God has two wills with respect to these enormous heavenly bodies: (1) He has ordained that they should serve the welfare of humans through the movements that they seem to have in our senses. (2) He has an independent will that governs each of them [irrespective of the human world]. These wills do not negate one another because they pertain to different aspects. The occurrence of one aspect of God's will does not nullify the occurrence of another aspect. At the same time, all pieces of the universe are connected to one another in a uniform network.

وَ هُوَ الَّذِی أَنْشَأَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ واحِدَةٍ فَمُسْتَقَرٌّ وَ مُسْتَوْدَعٌ قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْآیاتِ لِقَوْمٍ یَفْقَهُونَ ﴿۹۸﴾

(6:98) And He it is Who has produced you from a single soul, and (has given you) a dwelling-place* (mustaqarr) *and a repository* (mustawdaʿ); *indeed We have elaborated the signs for a people who discern.

The verse has been recited with both *mustaqarr* and *mustaqirr*. *Mustaqarr* is *ism makān* (noun of place, locative noun), meaning "the place of rest and settlement." In that case *mustawdaʿ* would also be a noun of place, meaning "the place where something is stored for a while." These two words are also mentioned in the verse: *And there is no animal in the earth but on Allah is the sustenance of it, and He knows its dwelling-place* (mustaqarrahā) *and its repository* (mustawdaʿahā)*; all is in a manifest book* (11:6). Based on this recitation [of *mustaqarr*], the verse would involve some omission for the purpose of brevity. The implied meaning is: "Then of you some are in a dwelling-place, and some are in a repository." If the word is recited as *mustaqirr*, which is semantically preferred, it would be an active participle noun as a subject, while *mustawdaʿ* would be a passive participle noun as an object. The implied meaning would be: "Then of you there are some who have settled, and some who have been deposited temporarily but not settled yet."

And He it is Who has produced you **(anshaʾakum, from inshāʾ)** ***from a single soul…:*** Apparently what is meant here is that the human population, despite its multitude and spread, all go back to Adam, who, according

to the Qur'an, was the origin of the current generation of human beings. *Mustaqirr* refers to those human beings who have been born and have settled in the earth, which is the *mustaqarr* of humankind, as He says: *and there is for you in the earth an abode* (mustaqarr) (2:36). *Mustawdaʿ* refers to those human beings who are not born yet, but are still deposited in the loins of men and wombs of women, to be born later. This interpretation is most appropriate given the verse's theme about how all members of this species have come forth from a single person. It is also possible to interpret *mustaqarr* and *mustawdaʿ* as verbal nouns (sing. *maṣdar*).[1] The verse uses *inshāʾ* (to produce, to originate) as opposed to *khalq* (to create) and other similar terms, because *inshāʾ* suggests a sudden origination as opposed to a gradual one.[2]

Note: the interpretation that we offered here [for *mustaqarr* and *mustawdaʿ*] also fits another verse where both words have appeared, which we already quoted: *And there is no animal in the earth but on Allah is the sustenance of it, and He knows its dwelling-place* (mustaqarrahā) *and its repository* (mustawdaʿahā) (11:6). It means: "He knows those which have settled in the earth by being already created, and He also knows those that are not yet created and have not settled in the earth but are on the way to being created."

The meaning of the current verse [6:98] is: "And He is the One Who brought you into being, O community of humankind, all from a single soul. He made you build the land until an appointed time. Thus the land is always occupied by you as long as your species is not extinct. At any given time, some of you are dwelling in the land, and some of you are deposited in the loins of men and the wombs of women, or only the loins of men, heading to dwell in the land later."

Here is a list of other interpretations suggested by the exegetes:

"Being produced from a single soul" means that everyone has the same

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1 In this case *mustaqarr* would mean the act of "dwelling or settlement"; and *mustawdaʿ* would mean the act of "deposition or entrustment." The meaning would be: "Then there is settlement [for some] and there is reposition [for others]." In cases like this, verbal nouns can also have either the subjective or objective meaning. The meaning would be: "Some of you are to settle—or to be settled—and some of you are to be deposited for now." (Trans.)

2 *Inshāʾ* is creation that is followed by growing and fostering, but it is not preceded by any previous example or stage. (Trans.)

kind of soul, which is the human soul.

It means that everyone is of the same species, which is a combination of soul and body. This is the reality of the human being, which consists of a human soul and a human body.

Mustaqarr means the wombs, and *mustawdaʿ* means the loins.

Mustaqarr means the earth, and *mustawdaʿ* means the graves.

Mustaqarr means the wombs, and *mustawdaʿ* means the earth or the graves.

Mustaqarr means the spirit, and *mustawdaʿ* means the body.

There are more interpretations to add to this list, but there is not much benefit in discussing them.

وَ هُوَ الَّذِی أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّماءِ ماءً فَأَخْرَجْنا بِهِ نَباتَ کُلِّ شَیْءٍ فَأَخْرَجْنا مِنْهُ خَضِراً نُخْرِجُ مِنْهُ حَبًّا مُتَراکِباً وَ مِنَ النَّخْلِ مِنْ طَلْعِها قِنْوانٌ دانِیَةٌ وَ جَنَّاتٍ مِنْ أَعْنابٍ وَ الزَّیْتُونَ وَ الرُّمَّانَ مُشْتَبِهاً وَ غَیْرَ مُتَشابِهٍ انْظُرُوا إِلی ثَمَرِهِ إِذا أَثْمَرَ وَ یَنْعِهِ إِنَّ فِی ذلِکُمْ لَآیاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ یُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿۹۹﴾

(6:99) And He it is Who sends down water from above **(al-samāʾ)**, ***then We bring forth with it plants of every kind, then We bring forth from it green (foliage)*** **(khaḍiran)** ***from which We produce grain piled up*** **(mutarākiban)** ***(in the ear); and of the palm-tree, of the sheaths of it*** **(ṭalʿihā)**, ***come forth clusters*** **(qinwān)** ***(of dates) within reach*** **(dāniyah)**, ***and gardens of grapes and olives and pomegranates, alike and unlike; behold the fruit of it when it yields the fruit and the ripening of it*** **(yanʿihi)**; ***most surely there are signs in this for a people who believe.***

Samāʾ here means "up, above." Anything that is above someone and shades the person is *samāʾ* [for that person]. *Khaḍir* means *akhḍar* (green, as in the color). It is apparently a contraction of *khāḍir* (greens, as vegetables). When grains are laid one on top of another they are called *mutarākib*, as in an ear. *Ṭalʿ* is the first part of a palm's fruit that appears. *Qinwān* is the plural of *qinw*, which means *ʿidhq*, which is a cluster of dates just like *ʿunqūd* (a bunch of grapes). *Dāniyah* is synonymous with *qarībah* (close, near). *Alike and unlike* means fruits that are similar and dissimilar in terms of kind, shape and other properties. *Yanʿ* means "the ripening of a fruit."

… then We bring forth with it plants **(nabāt)** ***of every kind…:*** *Nabāt*

(plant, vegetation) here has been interpreted as the blossoming and growth that is found in anything with vegetative power. The meaning would be: "By means of the water which We send down from above, We make this hidden faculty manifest." In other words, "Through rain We grow anything that grows, including plants, trees, humans and other animals."

In these verses [6:95-99], God lists certain parts of His creation for those possessed of sight and insight to see and reflect upon, so that they may be guided to His oneness. These can be classified into a few categories:

Things that have to do with the earth, such as splitting the grain and stones [6:95];

Things that have to do with the heaven, such as the night, the day, the sun, the moon and the stars [6:96-97];

Things that have to do with humankind, such as creating their species from a single soul, and their members having already settled [in the earth] or else deposited there [for the time being] [6:98];

Things that have to do with all of the above, such as sending rain from above, thereby producing food in the form of plants, grains and fruits, and growing things that have a vegetative faculty such as plants, animals and humans [6:99].

Stars are specifically described as a sign *for a people who know* (6:97); the production of human souls is specifically described as a sign *for a people who discern* (6:98); and the system of vegetation is specifically described as a sign *for a people who believe* (6:99). The connection should be clear: the system of vegetation in the universe is something clear and simple. One only needs to look at it in order to understand it, without any further effort. The only condition is that person's gaze must be illuminated by the fairness of faith, not defiled by the impurity of defiance and stubbornness. As with observing the stars and heavenly events, it is not something that an ordinary mind can comprehend without effort. It is rather the people of knowledge who appreciate it and understand the position of the stars and what happens in the heavens. Finally, coming to know the human souls and the secrets of their creation is something that requires not only theoretical knowledge and mental learning, but also inward consciousness, intense contemplation and arduous perseverance—which amount to *fiqh* (discernment, deep understanding).

وَ جَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ شُرَكاءَ الْجِنَّ وَ خَلَقَهُمْ وَ خَرَقُوا لَهُ بَنِينَ وَ بَناتٍ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ سُبْحانَهُ

وَ تَعالٰى عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ ﴿١٠٠﴾

(6:100) And they make (**jaʿalū, from jaʿl**) ***the jinn associates with Allah, while*** (**wa**) ***He created them, and they falsely attribute to Him sons and daughters without knowledge; glory be to Him, and highly exalted is He above what they ascribe (to Him).***

The verb *jaʿl* (make, assign) can have either one or two objects. In the first case, its object would be *associates*, and *the jinn* would be interpretive of that. In the second case, *the jinn* would be the first object and *associates* would be the second.[1] Apparently the particle *wa* (and, but, while) here means "while." Some grammarians have not permitted such a usage, but their argument is not clear. At any rate the statement *while He created them* (or *and He created them*) is meant to refute the polytheists. The meaning is: "They have ascribed the jinn as partners to God while He is the One Who has created the jinn." It is not possible for the created to be a partner of its Creator and at His level.

The jinn here would be "the devils." An example of their association with God would be the dualistic belief in Yazdān (the good principle) and Ahriman (the evil principle) that is attributed to the Majūs (Magians, Zoroastrians). Another example would be Yazīdiyyah, who believed in Satan (Iblīs) as a deity (which they call Peacock Angel and consider to be the king of all angels). *The jinn* may also refer to the well-known creatures [in Qur'anic terminology]. This would match a belief that is attributed to the polytheists: that God married a jinn lady, and from them angels were born. This possibility flows better with the next part of the verse: *And they make the jinn associates with Allah, while He created them, and they falsely attribute* (kharaqū) *to Him sons and daughters without knowledge* (6:100). Given this interpretation, *sons and daughters* would both be angels. They have "cut" (*kharaqū*) these angels for Him, meaning that they have falsely come up with them and attributed them to God. *Glory be to Him, and highly exalted is He above what they ascribe (to Him).*

If *sons and daughters* are more inclusive than the angels, then they would refer to what people of other religions held. For example, Hindus

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1 The current translation is based on the second case. In the first case the meaning would be: "And they ascribe associates to Allah, the jinn," where the order better matches the order of words in the Arabic text of the verse. (Trans.)

and Buddhists have beliefs similar to those of Christians who believe that the Christ is God's son. Similarly, archaeological discoveries show that other ancient idolaters believed in sons and daughters for God, whom they used to worship. The Arab polytheists also believed that the angels are God's daughters. We discussed these views under verses 3:79-80.[1]

بَدِيعُ السَّماواتِ وَ الْأَرْضِ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لَهُ وَلَدٌ وَ لَمْ تَكُنْ لَهُ صاحِبَةٌ وَ خَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ وَ هُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٠١﴾

(6:101) Originator (**badīʿ**) *of the heavens and the earth! How could He have a son when He has no consort, and He (Himself) created everything, and He is the Knower of all things.*

This verse is a response to the polytheists' belief in God having sons and daughters [mentioned in the last verse]. The verse provides two arguments in negation of this view: (1) The only way for God to have a real child is to have a spouse; given that He has no spouse, how can He have a child? (2) He is the Creator and Originator of everything, but a child is part of the parents which grows [into another independent being] through fertilization. Clearly a *part* of something cannot be *created* by it.

These two arguments are summed up in the fact that He is the original Creator of the heavens and the earth, where nothing in the universe is similar to Him in any aspect.[2] Thus, how can He have a spouse that He has married or children that are of the same kind as Him? We are informed of this by God Who is completely free from ignorance: *He is the Knower of all things*. Referring to our discussion under verse 3:79 (*It is not meet for a mortal that Allah should give him…*) would be helpful here.[3]

ذلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ لا إِلهَ إِلاَّ هُوَ خالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ فَاعْبُدُوهُ وَ هُوَ عَلى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ ﴿١٠٢﴾

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1 See volume 6 (1st ed.) of the English translation, pp. 132ff. (Trans.)

2 This shows that the author has implicitly interpreted *badīʿ* (Originator) as "a Creator who is Himself unique and without any like." The more apparent and common meaning of *badīʿ* is "a Creator whose creation is unique and unprecedented." (Trans.)

3 See volume 6 (1st ed.) of the English translation, pp. 139ff. (Trans.)

(6:102) That is Allah, your Lord, there is no god but He; the Creator of all things, therefore serve Him, and He is Guardian over all things.

This verse is a conclusion that is made following the previous verses. It means: "Since the matter is as We said above, your Lord is Allah Whom We described for you, not anyone else."

… there is no god but He…: This is an explicit statement of God's unity which was implicit in the first part of the verse. At the same time it explains and justifies the previous statement. That is: "He is the Lord and there is no other lord besides Him *because* He is God and there is no god besides Him. After all, can someone be a lord (*rabb*) without being a god (*ilāh*)?"

… the Creator of all things…: This sentence explains and justifies the last sentence, that *there is no god but He*. That is: "There is no other god but Him *because* He is the Creator of everything without any exception." Since there is no other creator of anything, nothing can be His partner in being a god who deserves to be served. Since all things are His creatures, they are all subservient servants and worshipers of Him [existentially], which means that they are not His equals and associates in being worshiped.

… therefore serve Him…: This is stated as a conclusion of *that is Allah, your Lord.* It means: "Since no one else is your Lord but God, you must serve Him."

… and He is Guardian over all things: That is: "He is the One Who watches over everything, directs its affairs, and organizes its existence and life." Given this, one must fear Him and not associate partners with Him out of ignorance. Therefore, this sentence effectively emphasizes *therefore serve Him*. In other words, "Do not disdain to serve Him because He is a guardian over you, and He is not heedless of your actions."

لا تُدْرِكُهُ الْأَبْصارُ وَ هُوَ يُدْرِكُ الْأَبْصارَ وَ هُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ ﴿١٠٣﴾

(6:103) No vision comprehends Him, but He comprehends all vision; and He is the All-Subtle, the All-Aware.

The last verse was addressed to the polytheists, whose simple understanding would interpret *He is Guardian over all things* (6:102) in a physical sense. They would assume God to be a physical being like other physical beings that act in the corporeal world. Hence this verse addresses and refutes such a misconception by saying: *No vision comprehends Him*. He is not comprehended by the eyes because He is transcendent of physicality and its properties.

… but He comprehends all vision…: This clarifies another misconception that would spring to the minds of the polytheists because of being accustomed to thinking about everything materially, and because of being immersed in their five senses and physical objects. They would assume that if the eyes do not comprehend God, then He is detached from the senses and physical objects, without any existential connection with them to know and observe them. As a result, He must be severed from His creatures: He cannot know them just as they do not know Him, and He cannot see anything just as nothing sees Him. God clarifies this misunderstanding by saying: *but He comprehends all vision*.

… and He is the All-Subtle* (al-laṭīf)*, the All-Aware* (al-khabīr)*: This justifies the previous claim. *Laṭīf* means "something fine that penetrates something else." *Khabīr* is derived from *khubrah* (expertise, awareness, cognizance). Since God encompasses all things in the real sense of it, He witnesses everything; neither the outward nor the inward aspect of anything escapes from Him.[1] At the same time He possesses knowledge and awareness, meaning that He knows the outward and inward aspect of everything without anything engaging Him or veiling Him from another. Thus He comprehends both the faculty of sight and what the faculty sees, as opposed to ordinary vision which only beholds the seen.

Instead of saying that God comprehends the *people* who have sight, it says that He comprehends the sights. This is because God's comprehension is different from our sensory perceptions which comprehend the outward aspects of things, which are accidental to them.[2] Our sight, for example, comprehends light, color, farness, nearness, largeness, smallness, movement and stillness. For God, however, the accidents as well as the substances that carry them are fully present, both outwardly and inwardly. They are all patent to Him without being veiled or absent from Him in any way. Thus He comprehends the total reality of sight, while no sight can comprehend Him.

These two verses [6:102-103] are fascinating in terms of their brilliant

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1 This is the author's interpretation of *al-laṭīf* (the All-Subtle); an implication of this quality is that God encompasses everything both outwardly and inwardly. (Trans.)

2 Here, "accident" (*ʿaraḍī*) is employed in its logical sense, meaning a property of a thing that is not essential to its nature, as opposed to "substance" (*jawhar*). (Trans.)

expression, easy flow, and brevity. They also lead one who reflects upon them to hidden mysteries.

Discussion on the Universality of Creation and its Inclusion of Everything

That is Allah, your Lord, there is no god but He; the Creator of all things: The apparent meaning of this sentence is the universality of creation, meaning that anything with any share of existence and reality has been created and brought to existence by God. God's description as *the Creator of all things* has also appeared in other places in His Book, and nowhere is there any evidence to restrict or limit its universality in any way whatsoever. The other verses are: *Say: Allah is the Creator of all things, and He is the One, the Dominant* (13:16); *Allah is the Creator of all things and He is a Guardian over everything* (39:62); *That is Allah, your Lord, the Creator of all things; there is no God but He* (40:62).

This topic has kindled astonishing quarrels among the followers of different sects and schools, leading to a variety of views on the subject. This is not something exclusively limited to Muslim theologians and philosophers, but has also been a subject of hot debate among Jewish and Christian thinkers. We are not concerned with presenting the views and arguments of the scholars here, because this is an exegesis of the Qur'an. Our job here is to infer the Qur'an's view on the topic based on other relevant verses.[1]

When we look at the things which exist in the universe—such as the sky, the planets, the stars, the earth, the mountains, the lowlands, the fields, the oceans, the deserts, the elements, the minerals, the clouds, the thunder, the lightning, the thunderbolt, the rain, the hail, the plants, the trees, the animals and the humans—we find them to have certain properties and effects which they cause and create, and which can be attributed to these beings as an action is attributed to its actor, or an effect to its cause. The Qur'an verifies this view and ascription.

It also confirms that humans have certain actions that are attributable to them like any other being, such as eating, drinking, walking, sitting,

1 The main controversy here is about "the createdness of actions," especially human actions. That is: "Are the actions of human beings created and caused by humans or by God?" As the author explains both ascriptions are true in a sense based on the Qur'an. (Trans.)

growing, understanding, realizing, rejoicing, delighting, being healthy and falling ill. The Qur'an does not make any difference between the human being and the other species in this sense. It talks about the different actions of human beings and gives them commands and prohibitions. None of these would make sense if humans did not have actions that are attributable to them. This means that the Qur'an views human beings just as we view them in our societies: we believe them to have certain actions and effects that are attributable to them; we hold them accountable for some of their actions which go back to their choice and volition in one way or another, such as eating, drinking, and walking; and we overlook some of their other properties that are not based on their free will, such as health, illness, youth, and age.

Therefore, the Qur'an's view of the system at work in the universe matches our primary understanding of the world it based on our sensory observations and rational experience. It is a system of beings of different kinds and natures, each of which has certain functions, has certain impacted on other beings, and is also affected by them. This is how the entire universe is arranged, where each part of it is completely related to all other parts. This is the universal law of causality which governs all contingent beings. According to this law, whenever we have something that may or may not exist [in and of itself], it should be given existence by another being [that is, it should be existentiated externally, from an outside source]. If the cause of something is absent, then the existence of that thing—the effect—is impossible. The Qur'an confirms this law and its universal application. Had this not been true or not universally applicable, one could not argue by it at all in any capacity. This is while the Qur'an has argued by it to prove the existence of the Creator and His qualities of oneness, power, knowledge, and so on.

Just as it is *impossible* for an effect to exist without its cause, it is also *necessary* for it to exist given its cause—because of the necessary existential relation between the two. God has approved this by using it in many places in His Book, where He states His noble attributes in order to prove their effects, consequences and implications. For example He says: *and He is the One, the Dominant* (13:16); *Surely Allah is Mighty, Avenger* (14:47); *Then surely Allah is Mighty, Wise* (2:209); *Surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful* (2:173). He has also established many events and matters by referring to their consequences and implications that have occurred afterwards. For

example He says: *But they would not believe in what they had rejected before* (10:74). Likewise, there are many other verses which talk about the believers, the disbelievers and the hypocrites. If it were possible for an effect to deviate from and fail its cause—assuming that the required conditions of its occurrence are met and its impediments are absent—then certainly none of these arguments would hold.

Hence, the Qur'an accepts that the world of existence is governed by the universal law of causality. It confirms that there is one or many causes for any being or accident that exists and for any event that occurs, such that if the cause is there then the effect must necessarily exist, and if the cause is not there then the effect cannot exist. This is the first observation that can be made when contemplating the Qur'an [in this regard].

Then, upon further study, we notice that God extends His creation to anything in the universe which can be called a "thing" (*shayʾ*). He says: *Say: Allah is the Creator of all things, and He is the One, the Dominant* (13:16), as well as the other verses in this regard which we quoted above [6:102, 39:62, 40:62]. This is based on the fact that His causality (*ʿilliyyah*) and agency (*fāʿiliyyah*) encompass all things despite the causal relationships that exist among the [contingent] beings at their own level—which we discussed above.[1] For example the Qur'an says: *He, Whose is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth…and Who created everything, then ordained for it a measure* (25:2); *He Who gave to everything its creation, then guided it (to its goal)* (20:50); *Who created and shaped, and Who measured and guided* (87:2-3).

We see another expression in these verses, where things are described as being created. Their actions, effects, movements and states are attributed to God's measurement and guidance. This means that the specific actions and properties of things trace to God's decree and measurement. One example is the movement of human beings who walk from one place to another, the fish which swim in the sea, and the birds which fly with their wings, as He says: *of them [the living creatures] is that which walks upon its belly, and of them is that which walks upon two feet, and of them is that which walks upon four; Allah creates what He wills* (24:45). There

1 In other words, God's action is the only, absolute and ultimate cause of every existential event in the universe. Other forces and factors that create existential events are in fact the means and manifestations of His causality and creation. "We are all puppets in His hands; and this is the monotheistic view." (Trans.)

are numerous verses to this effect. According to these verses, the specific actions of all beings are defined and measured by God. Similarly, the goals and ends that the beings seek—despite their differences, disagreement and variety— are set for them by God's measurement, and they move toward them by God's guidance which accompanies them from the onset of their creation until their end. All of these go back to the *arrangement of the Mighty, the Knowing* (6:96).

Therefore, we can distinguish two aspects in things: (1) their [unchanging] substance and essence; and (2) their existential limits as well as the transformations, stages and goals that they experience throughout their period of life or existence. The first aspect is attributable to God's creation (*khalq*, *khilqah*), and the second aspect goes back to God's measurement (*taqdīr*), which can be matched with the specifications of God's creation. Yet, there are another set of verses saying that the different parts of universe are connected to one another, harmonious with each other, and united together in existence. They are all governed by a single system that has no director other than God. This is sometimes referred to as "the argument of uniformity of direction" (*burhān ittiṣāl al-tadbīr*).

The above is what we can deduce by contemplating the Book of God. However, there remain three further points that one should take note of when studying and contemplating this subject:

(1) Ascription of Sins to God

According to some scholars, there are certain things that are undoubtedly evil and abhorrent, such as various forms of wrong and injustice. The intellect would never attribute them to God's Holy Precinct. Likewise, the Noble Qur'an has declared God to be clear and free from every kind of wrong and injustice in several verses, such as: *And your Lord is not in the least unjust to the servants* (41:46); *Say: Surely Allah does not enjoin indecency* (7:28). This contradicts the idea that *everything* has been created by God. Thus, the idea of universality of creation is subject to this exception which is backed by both rational and transmitted evidence. This means that human actions are created by human beings, but everything else beyond that is created by God, including the essence and effects of things.

These scholars have further added that if human actions are created by God, then it means that they are beyond human volition, which contradicts God's entire system of command, prohibition, obedience,

disobedience, reward, punishment, sending messengers, revealing scriptures, and enacting divine laws.

However, these scholars have missed a fine distinction between real matters [which exist as external entities] versus conventional matters [which are our mental constructions]. The latter are things that have no external existence, but they are things that human beings need to conceive (*taṣawwur*) or confirm (*taṣdīq*) in order to have a comfortable and functional social life. This means a confusion between existential and non-existential aspects of things. We addressed this subject in our discussion of *jabr* (compulsion, determinism, predestination) and *tafwīḍ* (delegation, entrustment) under verses 2:26-27.[1]

What can be said in this regard is that the Qur'an apparently implies the universality of God's creation where it says: *Allah is the Creator of all things* (kulli shayʾ) (6:102, 13:16, 39:62, 40:62). However, the Qur'an also says: *He Who made good everything* (kulla shayʾ) *that He has created* (32:7), which states that everything that God has created is good and beautiful. The two verses together express two points: (1) anything other than God which can be called a "thing" (*shayʾ*) is created by Him; and (2) anything that is created by Him is good. Therefore, "creation" and "goodness" are concomitant in existence, meaning that everything is good in the sense that it is a creation of God. In other words, the real and existential aspect of everything [which is what is attributable to God as His creation] is good and fair. The evil aspects of things are always accidental to their essence, not intrinsic. Things are evil only in a relative sense, in relation to other things, but not in their essence and reality, which is attributable to God.

It is true that the Qur'an talks about sin, injustice, evil and other similar terms [as apparently and existential realities]. However, building on what we said above, we should say that these are not real concepts and titles. They are not part of the existential properties of things which can be attributed to God and described as His creation. These concepts and descriptions [of evil and sin] rather apply to things with certain actions and effects in terms of some conventional, relational or proportional aspect [not in terms of their existential aspect in reality]. Indeed, for every disobedience and injustice there is some similar act that is not disobedience. The difference between the two is that one of them goes

1 See volume 2 (1st ed.) of the English translation, pp. 131ff. (Trans.)

against some legal or rational rule, causes disorder in the society, or fails to achieve an objective [all of which are conventional and/or relative properties]. For example consider adultery versus marriage: they are two similar acts that do not differ from one another in terms of their external reality and existence. Their only difference is in terms of their conformity and non-conformity with divine law, social customs, and/or collective interest. All of these are conventional and relational matters which apply to things based on how they conform to social welfare. Then they are used in turn as a basis for praise, rebuke, reward and punishment. Such relative aspects and conventional labels are only derived and determined mentally, by practical wisdom and collective human reason. They are only applicable in the realm of social conventions, but they have nothing to do with creation to begin with, except for some existential consequences that are tied to them such as reward and punishment. Creation (*khilqah*) and existentiation (*ījād*), on the other hand, pertain to the external world of existence and reality [as opposed to mental derivations and conventional classifications].

Consider an act that is viewed as injustice. It is only at the plane of convention that this act is called injustice, is considered to be evil, is viewed as a sin, and is followed by rebuke and punishment. But in the world of existence, it is only one or some effects, such as some movements made by a human being. The existential or created aspect of this act is caused by external causes, which all boil down to the Original Divine Cause [which is behind every existential reality]. The description of this act as "evil" and its subsequent implications are only a result of some legal or rational classification, but not an existential entity in the external world. Suppose, for instance, that Zayd is the manager of some organization. "Manager" is a social title that Zayd has in his interactions with us, and because of this title he is entitled to certain privileges such as being respected, being in charge of affairs, and having authority and priority over others. However, in terms of his existential reality, Zayd is only a human like all other humans. There is no difference whatsoever between him as a manager and his subordinates. At this plane there is no such thing as management and its implications. The same goes with other titles such as rich, poor, master, slave, honorable, ignoble, higher-class, lower-class, and numerous other titles.

Overall, even though God's creation encompasses everything, it applies

to the various acts that occur in society only in terms of their external existence and reality. Meanwhile, actions also have another aspect, which is how they are characterized in society as good, evil, obedience, disobedience and other similar labels. This aspect is not subject to creation and existentiation. These titles and qualities have no existence except in the field of social legislation and assessment, and the plane of mental derivation and convention.

Given the above, it should be clear that conventional titles and classifications—such as command, prohibition, good, evil, obedience, disobedience, reward, punishment, the connection between actions and their retribution, lordship, servitude, supervision, subordination, honor, dishonor and so on—are not existential entities that are *created* in the external world, meaning that they are not things that are created and existentiated. Thus it follows that the universality of God's creation does not necessitate any of the above-mentioned problems which the scholars have posed. For instance, it does not invalidate the system of religious command, prohibition, reward, punishment and so on.

After all, how can someone advocate such duality while God's Book repeatedly emphasizes the following ideas: (1) He is the Creator of all things; (2) He is the One, the Dominant; (3) His decree, determination, lordship, regulation and existential guidance embrace all things, without falling short of anything; (4) His kingdom, authority, capacity and rule include all things; and (5) everything in the heavens and the earth belongs to Him, whether apparent or hidden? How can these Qur'anic teachings—which inform us of a monotheistic lordship in the universe—comply with the existence of infinitely many creatures of other creators among His creatures?[1]

(2) The Theory of God's Habitual Custom (ʿ*Ādah*)

According to some scholars, since the Noble Qur'an attributes the creation of all things to God as their sole efficient cause (*al-ʿillat al-fāʿiliyyah*), it necessarily means the negation of a causal relationship between other things. There is no cause in the world of existence but God. As with other apparent causes, it is rather God's ʿ*ādah* (habitual custom, common

1 The "infinitely many creatures of other creators" would be the voluntary actions of human beings which are claimed to be created not but God, but by human subjects. (Trans.)

practice, normal course) to create what we know as "effect" after what we know as its "cause." Otherwise, in reality there is no causal relationship between them which would necessitate the occurrence of the so-called "effect" after the "cause." For example, even though fire is a source of heat, it has an equal relationship with both heat and cold in and of itself. Similarly, heat has an equal relationship with both fire and snow. The only thing is that God's *ʿādah* is such that He creates heat where there is fire, and cold where there is snow, without there being any necessity or requirement between them in any way whatsoever.

The above view leads to a negation of the universal law of causality which is the basis of all logical statements. With this negation, one cannot prove the existence of the Creator either, which means that we cannot refer to God's Book in the first place in search for evidence for the negation of causal relationships between things! Besides, how could it be that the Glorious Qur'an disproves the most basic rule of reason and deposes the intellect from making conclusions? This is while the truth and authority of the Qur'an is proven only by the rule of reason and *fiṭrah* (primary human nature, innate disposition). This is nothing but contradiction, because the conclusion refutes the premise, which effectively has no result but to refute that very conclusion.

What has led these scholars into this fallacy is failing to distinguish between causes where one embraces the other in a *ṭūlī* relationship (vertical, longitudinal, causal), and causes that are at the same level in an *ʿarḍī* relationship (horizontal, latitudinal, parallel). It is impossible for something to have two causes if those two causes are parallel to one another, at the same level and horizon (called *ʿarḍī* causes), but not if one is in continuation of another and subordinate to it (called *ṭūlī* causes). For example, the complete cause (*al-ʿillat al-tāmmah*) of fire necessitates not only the existence of fire, but also the existence of heat. This does not mean that heat is subject to two necessities and affected by two complete causes that act independently from one another. Instead, it is caused by a cause which is itself caused by another cause.[1]

1 In a vertical (*ṭūlī*) chain of causes, each ring is an effect of the ring above it, and a cause of the ring below it. In a horizontal (*ʿarḍī*) chain of causes, the rings are all at the same level of existential strength and intensity, without any causal relationship or superiority between them. Saying that there is absolutely no other cause in the universe but God is implicitly assuming that

To be more accurate, the source of their mistake is not distinguishing between two senses of agent (*fāʿil*): (1) "that *from which* something emanates (*mā minhu*)" versus (2) "that *through which* something emanates (*mā bihi*)."[1] The complete analysis of this topic would be beyond the scope of the current discussion.[2]

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(3) The Retired Architect

Some scholars have realized that on the one hand, God attributes the creation of everything to Himself, and on the other hand He also recognizes the existence of causal relationships between things. Thus they have concluded that whenever an event has a clearly known cause, then that is its cause; God on the other hand, is the cause of unknown events. This would evade the problem of having two independent causes for a single event. According to this view, God's role in giving existence comes down to two categories: (a) the initial creation and origination of things; and (b) the existence and occurrence of unknown events such as life and spirit in organic beings (that is, humans, animals and plants).

Following the first category, they would prove the Creator's existence by relying on the temporal origination of things.[3] For example, they say

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God's causation is horizontal and parallel to any other conceivable causation. If causes are horizontal and parallel to one another, then any inferior event can be an effect of only one of them. (Trans.)

1 Put differently, the former would be a "*source* of action" and latter would be a "*means* of action." (Trans.)

2 Discerning readers would recognize the affinity between the theory of *ʿādah* (God's habitual custom) and the viewpoint of the author (and other similar Shia thinkers). And indeed the theory of *ʿādah* is almost a perfect exposition of Qur'anic monotheism (*tawḥīd*). Nevertheless, this theory involves a subtle tinge of polytheism deep inside. It implicitly *differentiates* between God and the natural means, then explicitly acknowledges one and denies the other. The right monotheistic solution, however, is found in mysticism, where there is no duality to begin with. Yet, regardless of this fine point, the end result is the same: there is only one cause in the universe, and that is God. There is only God's "hand" which acts in the world; other beings are only "sleeves" through which the hand operates. The hand is "covered" by the sleeve, and it looks as though the sleeve is what moves. (Trans.)

3 Temporal origination means that God came into the scene at a certain point in time, brought things into existence, and then retired. (Trans.)

that there was a time when humankind did not exist, then it came to existence; there was a time when the earth did not exist, then it came to existence; and there was a time when the universe did not exist, then it came to existence.

Following the second category, they would prove God's existence by referring to events that we have not yet discovered their causes of existence and occurrence. The more primitive societies with this mentality used to include many other events that were unknown to the general public on the list, such as clouds, snow, rain, shooting stars, earthquake, famine, dearth, pandemics and so on. Then as they found out about the natural causes of these events, they would take up another unknown event and focus on that [to prove God's existence], or submit to the opponents [and concede that there is no God].

This view can be philosophically expressed by saying that a contingent being relies on the Necessary Being only for its *ḥudūth* (origination, createdness), but not for its *baqāʾ* (continuation, subsistence). In fact, a large number of theologians insist on this view, to the point that some of them have said, "If it were permissible for God to cease existing, then His nonexistence would not harm the existence of the universe." However, God is far exalted and clear of this view! It seems to me that this is rooted in Jewish cosmology, which has then spread to some Muslim thinkers. It is based on this view that they consider *badāʾ* and *naskh* (abrogation) to be impossible.[1] Nevertheless, this view is still common and alive among people.

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1 *Badāʾ* literally means "appearance." It is a theological term for when things occur unlike what was expected. Its impossibility is based on the idea that *the Jews say: The hand of Allah is tied up!* (5:64), meaning that He exercises no further control over the universe once He creates it and sets it in motion. The truth and possibility of *badāʾ* is a special Shia belief. See S.A. Rizvi, *The Justice of God*, ch. 4.

Naskh (abrogation) is when one statement by God—such as a verse in the Qur'an—is replaced by another. Its impossibility is again based on the same idea, that in their continuation and subsistence (*baqāʾ*), things are needless of God. See verses 2:106 and 16:101-102.

An underlying problem with most of these misconceptions is that they assume God to be a temporal being, while in reality He is not subject to the lapse of time. (Trans.)

Whatever its roots may be, this is one of the most baseless illusions and clearly against the Qur'an's arguments. God proves the Creator's existence and oneness by referring to His visible signs in the universe, which means the *ongoing* system that governs every kind of creature throughout its life, such as the changes and transformations that it goes through, the acts that it does or are done to it, and the benefits that it gives to others or receives from them. Some examples of these signs in the Qur'an are: (1) the sun, the moon, the stars, as well as their rise, fall and the subsequent benefits that people derive from them; (2) the change of seasons in earth; (3) the seas, the rivers and the ships that sail in them; (4) the clouds, the rain and their subsequent benefits for humans, animals and plants; (5) the natural stages of human creation, including sperm, fetus, childhood, youth, maturity and age.

All of these pertain to the continuation and subsistence (*baqāʾ*) of things, which are identified as the actions and effects of God. At the same time these events are causes for events that occur afterwards and subsequent to them. Today's events are the causes of tomorrow's events, just as they are the effects of yesterday's events. If these events were needless of God in their subsistence, and if the universe were self-sufficient in pursuing its course by its internal system and set of causes, then none of these Qur'anic arguments and proofs would hold. It should be clarified that the Qur'an pursues two objectives in referring to these signs: (1) to prove God as their cause and agent (*fāʿil*); and (2) to prove God as their end and goal (*ghāyah*). Let us will analyze how the Qur'an argues through each of these two channels:

(1) With regards to God being the cause and agent of everything, the Qur'an says: *Is there any doubt about Allah, the Originator of the heavens and the earth?* (14:10). It is evident that no being in the contingent world has created itself. Nor has another being like itself given it existence, because that other being would be equally needy of being created. It must be that existence traces back to something that exists by the virtue of itself, such that it cannot possibly be characterized by nonexistence. Otherwise, none of these things would come to existence. Hence, all beings are brought to existence by God Who subsists by Himself, without being subject to any loss or change whatsoever.

However, the beings are not needless of God even after they are created. Existentiation is not like heating and other similar processes. Once

something is warmed up by fire, it retains its heat for while even if the fire is removed. However, if we assume the same thing about existence, then it would mean that once something is given existence, it all of a sudden turns into a necessary being which subsists by itself. An implication of this is that the object cannot possibly be annihilated, because otherwise it would contradict our assumption. This is something that we can understands by our basic and innate human nature (*fiṭrah*): that if the beings had their existence for themselves and were independent of their Lord in one way or another, then they would never undergo death and decay, because it is impossible for something to rule its own destruction and wretchedness.

This idea [that the beings are not independent of God in their subsistence] can be inferred from verses like: *Everything is perishing except His Face* (28:88); *And they control not for themselves any harm or profit, and they control not death nor life, nor raising (the dead) to life* (25:3). This is also referred to by many other verses which state that God is the sole Possessor of all things; there is no other owner for anything; and nothing has any status other than being His property.

Therefore, just as beings receive existence from God at the onset of their creation and origination, they continue to receive existence from Him as long as they live and subsist. A being exists as long as God bestows existence upon it; but the moment God cuts off His bestowment, the name of that thing is wiped off from the tablet of existents. God says: *All do We aid—these as well as those—out of the bounty of your Lord, and the bounty of your Lord is not confined* (17:20). There are many more verses in this regard.

(2) The idea that God is the end and goal of everything is found in verses which describe the uniform and harmonious system which governs the universe. The beings and events in the universe are ordered as a congruous chain, such that when one member of this system advances toward its perfection and happiness, it also helps the other members to advance. For example, human beings benefit from the system which governs the animals and plants. Similarly, plants benefit from the system that governs the earth and the atmosphere. Earthly beings benefit from the heavenly beings and vice versa. This means that all beings in the universe are incorporated in a single connected system which moves every species toward its existential perfection and bliss. If one's reason is awake and his innate human nature remains unadulterated, then the person will only conclude that all this must be by the design and direction of a Planner

Who is certainly Mighty, Knowledgeable, Wise and Aware.

This design and direction is based on creating, existentiating and fashioning the essence, being and identity of every thing in a mold that determines its effects and keeps it on its desired track from the onset of its creation throughout the stages of its journey that are planned for it, until the point where it is supposed to end. The existents carry through these stages while being mounted on means and instruments, driven from behind by God's measurement (*qadar*), and led from the front by His decree (*qaḍāʾ*).[1] The Qur'an says: *Surely His is the creation and the command* (7:54); *Surely His is the judgment* (6:62); *And everyone has a direction to which he turns* (2:148); *And Allah judges; there is no repeller of His judgment* (13:41); *He Who watches over every soul as to what it earns* (13:33).

How can someone contemplate the likes of these verses [which are many] and then turn them away from their clear and explicit meaning? That would be the case if one has the following view of the creation:

> God only created the beings at the first stage, but then left them on their own and sat aside watching them, like a retired architect. After all, what else could He do beyond that stage? Then the beings started to move around and interact with each other according to causal relationships between them, while being independent as causes and effects. This is all while their Creator is watching them on the side and awaiting the day when all of them perish, so that He may give them a new creation where He rewards those who listened to His call in their life, and punishes those who arrogantly defied Him. Before then He simply tolerates their mischief, except that sometimes His wrath is kindled because of what He sees from some of them, whereby He prevents them from what they wish to do and stops their plots as a barrier and opponent that works parallel to them at the same level.

What this means is that God steps in and stops being an impartial spectator in certain cases that the independent set of causes and effects in the universe pursues a goal that displeases Him or does not please Him. Thus He interrupts the causes at work in the world by creating His

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1 Apparently *qaḍāʾ* and *qadar* are used interchangeably and synonymously here. Overall, what is meant is that the orderly system of universe indicates that the beings are following a well-designed plan toward their goal and perfection. (Trans.)

desired outcome. This can only be by suspending the law of causality in that certain case, because if He brings about what He wants through the ordinary causes and means, then the outcome would be an effect of the causes at work in the universe, not an effect of God.

In the same light, these thinkers have insisted that things like miracles and supernatural acts occur only by God's will, without complying with the universal law of causality. This reduces to negating the law of causality in the universe, which negates their initial belief that all things need God for their origination, but not for their subsistence.

Hence, these thinkers must choose one of two views:

(1) The universe is completely needless of God; it operates independently by its own orderly system; and He has no impact in any part of it or any event that happens in it. The only need of the universe to God was for its initial origination, but now that it has been created, it no longer depends on Him.

(2) God is the Creator of anything which can be called a "thing" (*shayʾ*); He bestows existence on all things both upon their origination and ever after that, as long as they subsist; and no being or event is needless of Him even for the twinkling of an eye.

The reader should realize by now that the Qur'an rejects the first view because there are many verses which talk about the applicability of God's creation to everything, and His invisible dominance over the outward, inward, beginning and end of every being and event, both in origination and subsistence. Therefore, the Qur'an leaves us only with the second view, which is also confirmed by a meticulous rational discussion [which we presented above].

Given all of what we said above, it should be clear that *Allah is the Creator of all things* (13:16) retains its apparent universality, without being subject to any rational or transmitted exception.

قَدْ جاءَكُمْ بَصائِرُ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَمَنْ أَبْصَرَ فَلِنَفْسِهِ وَ مَنْ عَمِيَ فَعَلَيْها وَ ما أَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِحَفِيظٍ ﴿١٠٤﴾

(6:104) Indeed there have come to you clear proofs **(baṣāʾir)** ***from your Lord; whoever will therefore see, it is for his own soul, and whoever***

will be blind, it shall be against himself, and I am not a keeper over you.

Majmaʿ al-bayān says: "*Baṣīrah* means some proof or evidence by which one can see something. Its plural is *baṣāʾir*." It has also been said that *baṣar* is for the eye [that is, sight], while *baṣīrah* is for the heart [that is, insight]. Either way, the root meaning is to perceive something by sight, which is the strongest of the senses, and to receive something from the visible world. "Seeing and blindness" in this verse refer respectively to "knowledge and ignorance" or "belief and disbelief" by extension.

Indeed there have come to you clear proofs from your Lord …: Here, God is apparently referring to the clear arguments in the previous verses, asserting that He is One and without any associates. The meaning is: "These arguments are clear proofs that have come to me from God by means of revelation." The verse is stated as a speech by the Prophet, addressed to the polytheists. The Prophet then tells them that they should decide for themselves: "If they want they can choose to see [the truth] by these proofs, and if they want they can choose to be blind to them. It is up to them to choose, but seeing will be in their advantage while blindness will be against them."

… and I am not a keeper over you: Given the above interpretation, what is meant here is that the people's minds and hearts are not under the control of the Prophet. Therefore, "keeping" here means having a creational and existential (*takwīnī*) influence, which is negated from the Prophet. Instead, he is only a sincere admonisher and advisor for them [on the legislative plane].

This verse is more of a side note or parenthetical remark that is mentioned between the verses before and after. It is an address by God but through the tongue of His Prophet. It is as if a messenger is sent to his people to convey God's message to them, but in the midst of delivering the message he adds a few points about himself being an earnest advisor for them and being free from any evil intention or personal interest. This serves to urge and encourage them to listen, obey and submit to his message.

وَ كَذٰلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ الْآيَاتِ وَ لِيَقُولُوا دَرَسْتَ وَ لِنُبَيِّنَهُ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾

(6:105) And thus do We repeat **(nuṣarrifu, from taṣrīf)** *the communications and that they may say: You have read* **(darasta)***; and that We may make it clear to a people who know.*

Darasta has also been recited as *dārasta* and *durisat*. *Taṣrīf* is defined as expressing an idea in different terms in order to convey it from different angles. *Darasta* is derived from *dars*, which means "to learn," or more specifically "to learn by reading." *Dārasta* would mean the same, except that the extra letter implies a stronger sense of the meaning.[1] The word is also recited as *durisat*, which is a derivative of *durūs*, meaning to "wear out and disappear." Then their claim would be similar to what is narrated from the polytheists in other verses, where they call the Qur'an "fables of the ancients" (*asāṭīr al-awwalīn*).[2]

The meaning is: "It is in this manner that We reiterate Our communications with different expressions in order to achieve many objectives.[3] One of these objectives is that the wretched folk may completely actualize their wretchedness by accusing you that you have learnt these from the People of the Book, or by saying that these speeches are meaningless today because they are extinct and worn out. Another objective is to clarify these communications for those who know through purifying their hearts and expanding their breasts by it." Thus, this verse is similar to the verse: *And We reveal of the Qur'an that which is a healing and a mercy to the believers, and to the unjust—it only adds to their perdition* (17:82).

Examining Narrations

(1) Imam al-Ṣādiq said: God cannot be described. How can He be described while He says in His Book: *And they have not measured Allah with His due measure* (6:91)? It means that whenever He is described by any measure, He is greater than that.[4]

(2) Concerning *And they have not measured Allah with His due measure* (6:91) Ibn ʿAbbās said: This refers to the infidels who did not

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1 There is an extra letter *alif* in the Arabic script of *dārasta*. "A stronger sense of the meaning" here would mean more emphasis on the idea that the Prophet had read and learnt the Qur'an from other sources. (Trans.)

2 See verses 6:25, 8:31, 16:24, 23:83, 25:5, 27:68, 46:17, 69:15 and 83:13. (Trans.)

3 The objectives are more than what is mentioned in the verse because of the particle "and" (*wāw*) in *and that they may say….* This particle joins the mentioned benefits and objectives to some other benefits and objectives that are omitted—perhaps because they could not be stated here, or because they would be a digression from the current discussion. (Trans.)

4 *Al-Kāfī*, via its chain of narration, on the authority of al-Fuḍayl b. Yasār.

believe in God's power over them. If one believes that God is Powerful over all things, then he has measured the power of God with its due measure, but if one does not believe in this, then he has not believed in God as He deserves.

When they say: Allah has not revealed anything to a mortal: This refers to the Israelites. The Jews said, "O Muḥammad! Has God revealed a book to you?"

He replied, "Yes."

They said, "By God, God has not revealed anything from heaven."

Thus God revealed: "*Say*—O Muḥammad—*Who revealed the Book which Moses brought, a light and guidance for the people… nor your fathers. Say: Allah*—revealed it."[1]

Author's comment: The interpretation at the beginning of this narration is contrary to the apparent meaning of the verse, as we discussed above. Instead, the apparent meaning of the verse is that those who said *Allah has not revealed anything to a mortal* are the same people who *have not measured Allah with His due measure*.

(3) Concerning *when they say: Allah has not revealed anything to a mortal* (6:91) Al-Suddī said: It was a Jew called Finḥāṣ who said, "God has not revealed anything to Muḥammad."[2]

Author's comment: The difference between what the Qur'an says and what is narrated from Finḥāṣ ruins the meaning [of the verse in its context]. It is also unlikely that the above narration is not a literal quote of what he said because of its obvious difference from the verse.

(4) Saʿīd b. Jubayr said: A Jewish man named Mālik b. al-Ṣayf came to the Prophet and started debating with him. The Prophet told him, "I ask you by the One Who sent the Torah upon Moses: does the Torah say that God detests a corpulent scholar?"

The man was indeed an obese scholar, so he was enraged and said, "By God, *Allah has not revealed anything to a mortal!*"

His fellow companions told him, "What are you saying? Not even to Moses?"

He repeated, "*Allah has not revealed anything to a mortal.*"

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1 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Abū al-Shaykh and Ibn Mardawayh.

2 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Abū al-Shaykh.

Thus God revealed the verse: *And they have not measured Allah with His due measure…* (6:91).[1]

(5) The Messenger of God said: Umm al-Qurá (the Mother of Cities, in 6:92) is Mecca.[2]

(6) Once Imam al-Bāqir was asked, "Why is the Prophet called *ummī*?"[3] He replied: "Because he was from Mecca. This is based on God's words: *that you may warn the Mother of Cities and those around her* (6:92). *The Mother of Cities* (Umm al-Qurá) refers to Mecca, and *those around her* refers to Taif (al-Ṭāʾif).[4]

Author's comment: Based on this narration, the verse [6:92] would be similar to: *And warn your nearest relations* (26:214), which means that the Prophet should warn a specific group of people. This specific command does not contradict the universality of the his message, as indicated in other verses such as: *that with it [the Qur'an] I may warn you and whomsoever it reaches* (6:19), *it [the Qur'an] is nothing but a reminder to the nations* (6:90) and *Say: O people! Surely I am the Messenger of Allah to you all* (7:158).

(7) Once Imam al-Ṣādiq was asked about verse 6:91 (*Say: Who revealed the Book…which you make into parchment that you show while you conceal much?*). He said: They used to conceal whatever they wished, and reveal whatever they wished.[5]

(8) In another narration the Imam said: "They used to write it [the Torah] on parchment; then they would reveal whatever they wished and conceal whatever they wished." The Imam then added, "Any book that has been revealed [by God] is with the people of knowledge (*ahl al-ʿilm*)."[6]

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1 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abī Ḥātim.

2 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of Ibn Mardawayh, on the authority of Buraydah.

3 *Ummī* is often translated as "unschooled." Literally it is an adjective, meaning "attributed to *umm*" or "*umm*-like," where *umm* can mean "mother," "root," or according to this hadith "Umm al-Qurá" which is Mecca. (Trans.)

4 *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, on the authority of ʿAlī b. Asbāṭ.

5 *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, on the authority of ʿAbd-Allāh b. Sinān.

6 *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*.

Author's comment: "People of knowledge" alludes to the Imams from the Ahl al-Bayt.

(9) Concerning verse 6:93 (*And who is more unjust than he who forges a lie…*) Shuraḥbīl b. Saʿd said: It was concerning ʿAbd-Allāh b. Abī Sarḥ that this verse was revealed: *And who is more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah, or says: It has been revealed to me; while nothing has been revealed to him* (6:93). Then when the Messenger of God entered Mecca, he [ʿAbd-Allāh] took refuge with ʿUthmān, who was his brother through nursing. ʿUthmān hid him until the people of Mecca were granted safety, then ʿUthmān interceded so he would be granted safety as well.[1]

(10) Concerning *And who is more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah, or says: It has been revealed to me; while nothing has been revealed to him* (6:93) ʿIkrimah said: "This was revealed about Musaylimah who used to prophesize and speak in rhyme." Concerning "*and he who says: I will reveal the like of what Allah has revealed*" (6:93) he said: "This was revealed about ʿAbd-Allāh b. Saʿd b. Abī Sarḥ. He used to be one of the Prophet's scribes, but when the Prophet would dictate him to write *the Mighty, the Wise* he would instead write 'the Forgiver, the Compassionate.' Then he would recite it to the people and tell them, 'They are both the same.' Finally he relinquished Islam and joined the Quraysh [polytheists in Mecca]."[2]

(11) Imam al-Ṣādiq said: ʿAbd-Allāh b. Saʿd b. Abī Sarḥ was ʿUthmān's brother through nursing. He migrated to Medina and accepted Islam. Since he had beautiful handwriting, when the Messenger of God received revelation, he would summon ʿAbd-Allāh to write what had been revealed to him. However, when the Messenger of God would tell him to write *and God is Hearing, Seeing* he would write "Hearing, Knowing" [that is, he would write *ʿalīm* instead of *baṣīr*]; and when he would dictate *and Allah is Aware of what you do* he would write "and Allah Sees what you do" [that is, he

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1 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of al-Ḥākim in *al-Mustadrik*.

2 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of Ibn Jarīr and Abū al-Shaykh. The same idea has been narrated through other chains than the ones presented above.

would write *baṣīr* instead of *khabīr*]. He also used to differentiate between letters *tāʾ* and *yāʾ* [in writing],[1] whereby the Messenger of God said, "They are the same."[2]

Then he apostatized and returned to Mecca. He told the Quraysh [tribe], "By God Muḥammad does not know what he says! I say the like of what he says and he does not refute it. So I reveal the like of what God has revealed." In response to this, God revealed to His Prophet: *And who is more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah, or says: It has been revealed to me; while nothing has been revealed to him, and he who says: I will reveal the like of what Allah has revealed?* (6:93).

When the Messenger of God conquered Mecca, he ordered ʿAbd-Allāh to be killed. But then ʿUthmān took him by the hand to the Holy Mosque where the Messenger of God was. He said, "O Messenger of God! Pardon him!" The Messenger of God remained silent. When ʿUthmān repeated his request a second time, the Prophet replied, "He is yours."

When they went away, the Messenger of God told his Companions,

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1 The letters *tāʾ* and *yāʾ* are orthographically identical, except for their two dots being above or below. Their differentiation would be applicable in distinguishing different verb conjugates of the present tense, where the second person (and third-person singular feminine) verbs are recorded with *tāʾ*, while the third person conjugations are recorded with *yāʾ*. This narration confirms the idea that it was uncommon in early Islam to dot Arabic writing. (Trans.)

2 This part of the narration is rather obscure. It says *huwa wāḥid*, which literally means "it [or he] is one." Some possible interpretations are: (1) It means that "He is the same God; the One Who is Aware is also Seeing." Therefore, this sentence would not refer to the dotting of the letters. It implies that either way God has both qualities, but you cannot alter the revelation at your own discretion. Alternatively, it implies that it is the same God, and your alteration does not change His real qualities. (2) It means that "the two letters should be recorded in the same way." (3) It means that "he is just one scribe, and given the existence of other scribes and memorizers, he cannot distort the Qur'an." (4) It means that "what actually gets written is the same as what I dictate." That is, "even though you intend to write something else, Gabriel stops you and makes the writing match God's revelation." This is Shaykh Ṣadūq's interpretation in *Maʿānī al-akhbār* (Qum: Muʾassasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1403/1982), p. 347. These interpretations would only be needed and applicable if the narration is authentic, which is very unlikely as the author explains below. (Trans.)

> "Did I not tell you that whoever sees him should kill him?"
> A man replied, "O Messenger of God! My eyes were fixed on you, waiting for your hint to kill him right away."
> The Messenger of God said, "Indeed the prophets do not kill anyone by hinting." Thus ʿAbd-Allāh became one of those who were freed in the conquest of Mecca.[1]

Author's comment: One exegete has narrated the same story on the authority of ʿIkrimah and al-Suddī, and then comments:

These two narrations are apocryphal, because nowhere in the Meccan chapters does it say "Hearing, Knowing," "Knowing, Wise" or "Mighty, Wise." The only exception is Sūrah Luqmān [which says *God is Mighty, Wise* in verse 31:27], but even that was revealed after Sūrah al-Anʿām, according to Ibn ʿAbbās. Not only that, but the verse in that chapter which ends with "Mighty, Wise" and the two verses after it were actually revealed in Medina, as specified in [Suyūṭī's] *al-Itqān*….

Some have said that perhaps this verse [6:93] was revealed in Medina, but there is no need to consider this view when the narration is unauthentic.

Some have said: "When ʿAbd-Allāh b. Saʿd apostatized, he started mocking the Qur'an. It could be that some of what is found in these accounts are things that he forged as a lie and attributed to God, because none of the narrated phrases that he presumably altered are found in the chapters that were revealed during the time that he was a scribe. He doubted the Prophet's revelation [and apostatized] because of his alterations, but he went back to Islam before the conquest of Mecca [which means that he accepted Islam again voluntarily]. If the Prophet had approved of and kept those alterations, then he would not have accepted Islam again."

The reader should know a few points with respect to the above: (1) That the story of Ibn Abī Sarḥ is also mentioned in authentic narrations from Imams al-Bāqir and al-Ṣādiq, which explicitly say that this story happened in Medina after the Prophet's migration, not in Mecca. The accounts narrated through Sunni chains also suggest that it occurred in Medina, and there is no explicit mention that it was in Mecca. (2) What

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1 *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, on the authority of his father, on the authority of Ṣafwān, on the authority of Ibn Muskān, on the authority of Abū Baṣīr. The same idea has been reported through different chains of narration from Imams al-Bāqir and al-Ṣādiq in *al-Kāfī*, *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī* and *Majmaʿ al-bayān*.

is narrated from Ibn ʿAbbās about the order of revelation of the Qur'anic chapters is no more authentic than the narrations which the above exegete has rejected. (3) The above exegete has claimed that Ibn Abī Sarḥ returned to Islam voluntarily before the conquest of Mecca. However, as we presented above, both Shia and Sunni accounts state that he did not return to Islam until the fall of Mecca, when the Messenger of God declared that his blood was liable, until ʿUthmān interceded for him and the Prophet pardoned him. (4) God says, *and he who says: I will reveal the like of what Allah has revealed* (6:93), which does not exactly match what is narrated from Ibn Abī Sarḥ: "I reveal the like of what God has revealed."[1]

Moreover, there is a clear uniformity between this entire verse and the next verse. This refutes the idea that part of this verse—*And who is more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah, or says: It has been revealed to me; while nothing has been revealed to him, and he who says: I will reveal the like of what Allah has revealed?* (6:93)—was revealed in Medina. If that were the case, then it would make more sense for both verses to be entirely Medinite.

There is yet another narration that offers another context and circumstance for the revelation of this verse, as follows.

(12) ʿIkrimah said: When God revealed, *By the emissaries that blow! By the hurricanes that rage!...*"(77:1-2), al-Naḍr from Banī ʿAbd al-Dār tribe said in response: "By the grinders that grind! By the kneaders that knead!" and he kept making up several statements like this. Then God revealed the verse: *And who is more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah, or says: It has been revealed to me; while nothing has been revealed to him…* (6:93).[2]

(13) Concerning *today shall you be recompensed with an ignominious chastisement* (6:93) Imam al-Bāqir said: That is the thirst on the Day of Resurrection.[3]

(14) Similarly Imam al-Ṣādiq said: It means thirst.[4]

(15) Imam al-Ṣādiq said: When God wanted to create Adam, he

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1 The difference is that the verse says *sa-unzilu* (I will reveal) while the narration says *anā unzilu* (I reveal). (Trans.)

2 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of ʿAbd b. Ḥamīd.

3 *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, on the authority of Salām.

4 *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, on the authority of al-Fuḍayl.

commissioned Gabriel in the first hour of Friday, who stretched his hand, extending from the seventh heavens to the lowest heaven, picking up a handful of dust from each heaven. He stretched another hand from the seventh earth on the top to the seventh earth at the bottom, picking up another handful [from each earth]. Then God commanded His word [that is, Gabriel] to hold the first handful in his right hand and the other in his left.[1] Thus the clay was cleaved into two: one part was taken from the earth[s] and one part was taken from the heavens. God then said to the clay in his [Gabriel's] right hand: "From you will come out the messengers, the prophets, their successors [of prophets], the saints, the believers, the felicitous, and those whom I will to honor." Thus what He said about them was fixed for them as He said. He then said to that which was on his [Gabriel's] left hand: "From you will come out the tyrants, the polytheists, the disbelievers, the transgressors, and those for whom I decree humiliation and misfortune." Thus what He said about them was fixed for them as He said.

Thereafter the two clays mixed together, as God says: *Surely Allah is the Splitter of the grain* (al-ḥabb) *and the date-stone [to germinate]* (al-nawá) (6:95). *Ḥabb* (lit. "grain, seed") refers to the clay of the believers, upon which God has cast His love (*ḥubb*). *Nawá* (lit. "date-stone, pit") is the clay of the disbelievers who have distanced (*naʾaw*) themselves from every good. It is called *nawá* because it has gone far away from every good and from God. God says: *He brings forth the living from the dead and He is the bringer forth of the dead from the living* (6:95). "The living [from the dead]" refers to the believers whose clay comes out from the clay of disbelievers, and "the dead who come out of the living" are the disbelievers who come out from the clay of the believers. Thus, "the living" are the believers and "the dead" are the disbelievers. This is the meaning of His words: *Is he who was dead then We raised him to*

1 Another possibility is that "word" (*kalimah*) here means God's will and decree to separate between the two good and evil clays. Also, since there is no further mention of Gabriel, it could be that God held the two portions in His hands, where "God's hand" would require a proper interpretation, such as His power, regulation or authority. (Trans.)

life… (6:122), where "being dead" refers to one's clay being mixed with the clay of the disbelievers, and "life" refers to the separation that God makes between them by His word [that is, His will and decree]. In this way when a believer is born, God takes him out from darkness to light, while he was in darkness before; and He takes a disbeliever out from light to darkness after having been in light. This is the meaning of His words: *So that it may warn whosoever is living, and (that) the word may be fulfilled against the disbelievers* (36:70).

Author's comment: This is among the narrations that talk about *ṭīnah* (substance, nature). We shall discuss them in their appropriate place, by God's will. The meanings offered in this hadith for *ḥabb* (grain) and *nawá* (date-stone) should be viewed as hidden meanings of the terms, not as an apparent and direct interpretation. The same idea is found in other narrations.

(16) Concerning *and He has made the night for rest* (sakanan) (6:96) Imam al-Riḍā said: Indeed God made the night for *sakan* (calmness, rest, serenity) and also made women for *sakan*. Thus it is part of the Sunnah[1] to marry (*tazwīj*)[2] at night and to feed others.[3]

(17) Imam al-Ṣādiq said: Marry at night, for indeed God has made it for rest. Do not go after your needs at night.[4]

(18) Imam al-Kāẓim said: "Indeed God created the prophets on prophethood, thus they cannot be but prophets. He created the believers on belief, thus they cannot be but believers. He also entrusted a group with faith [temporarily]. If He wants, He will finish it for them [to the end of their life], and if He wants He will take it away from them. About them it can be applied: *a dwelling-place* (mustaqarr) *and a repository* (mustawdaᶜ) (6:98)."

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1 Sunnah means "the Prophet's tradition" and also "recommended acts." (Trans.)

2 In light of other narrations and the end of this hadith, apparently *tazwīj* here means holding the marriage ceremony and inaugurating the joint life of the new couple. Another possibility is that *tazwīj* here is an indirect reference to sexual intercourse. Overall, both ideas are found in the narrations. (Trans.)

3 *Tafsīr al-ᶜAyyāshī*, on the authority of al-Ḥasan b. ᶜAlī b. bint Ilyās.

4 *Tafsīr al-ᶜAyyāshī*, on the authority of ᶜAlī b. ᶜUqbah, on the authority of his father.

The Imam then said: "So-and-so was only entrusted with faith temporarily. Hence, when he attributed a lie to us God took away his faith."[1]

Author's comment: There are many narrations from the Imams in *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī* and *Tafsīr al-Qummī* which interpret *mustaqarr* and *mustawdaʿ* as these two forms of faith [that is, permanently fixed vs. temporarily entrusted, respectively]. The above narration clarifies that these narrations present a case of application and conformity (*jary wa inṭibāq*).[2]

(19) Concerning *a dwelling-place and a repository* (6:98) Imam al-Ṣādiq said: That is, dwelling in the womb and entrusted in the loins.[3] Sometimes it means one who is entrusted with faith which is then taken away from it…[4]

(20) Once Ḥumrān asked Imam al-Bāqir about *Originator* (badīʿ) *of the heavens and the earth* (6:101). The Imam replied: [It means that] He originated everything as per His knowledge without any model from before. He originated the heavens and the earths while previously there were no heavens or earths. Have you not heard His words: *and His Throne was upon the water* (11:7)?[5]

(21) Concerning *No vision comprehends Him* (6:103) Imam al-Ṣādiq said: It means rational and conceptual comprehension.[6] Don't you see that in the verse: *Indeed there have come to you clear proofs* (baṣāʾir, from baṣar) *from your Lord; whoever will therefore*

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1 *Al-Kāfī*, via its chain of narration, on the authority of Yūnus, on the authority of "some of our companions."

2 The hadith literally says that "this verse *jarat fīhim*," where the verb *jarat* is from the same root as *jary* (application). The author has subtly picked on this verb to infer that these narrations do not provide the apparent and primary interpretation of the verse, but another idea that has been matched with the verse as one of its secondary or hidden applications. (Trans.)

3 In other words, *mustaqarr* means the fertilized egg which is planted and fixed in a woman's womb, while *mustawdaʿ* means the sperm which is temporarily entrusted in a man's loins until it is transferred to a womb. (Trans.)

4 *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, on the authority of Saʿd b. Saʿīd b. Abī al-Aṣbagh.

5 *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, on the authority of Sadīr.

6 The word used in the text is *wahm* (illusion, imagination, whim), which, in this narration as in most other narrations, means *ʿaql* (intellect, intellection), as repeatedly pointed out by Āyatullāh Ḥasan-Zādah Āmulī. (Trans.)

see (abṣara, from baṣar)*, it is for his own soul* (6:104), *baṣar* (lit. "eyesight, vision") does not mean the seeing of eyes. Similarly, *and whoever will be blind, it shall be against himself* (6:104) does not mean blindness of the eyes. Instead, what is meant is rational comprehension. It is like when one says, "So-and-so is *baṣīr* (insightful, perceptive, discerning, expert) in poetry; so-and-so is *baṣīr* in jurisprudence; so-and-so is *baṣīr* in coins; so-and-so is *baṣīr* in clothes." God is far greater than being seen by the eye.[1]

(22) Ṣafwān b. Yaḥyá says: Once Abū Qurrah—the scholar of hadith—asked me to take him to Abū al-Ḥasan al-Riḍā. I asked the Imam's permission for this, which he granted. So he came and asked the Imam some legal questions about what is lawful and unlawful, until he got to ask about *tawḥīd* (monotheism). There Abū Qurrah said, "It has been narrated to us that God divided [His] sight and [His] speech between two prophets: He gave speech to Moses, and sight to Muḥammad."

Abū al-Ḥasan replied, "Who brought God's message to the two weighty creatures—the jinn and humankind—that: *No vision comprehends Him* (6:103), *while they do not comprehend Him in knowledge* (20:110) and: *Nothing is as His likeness* (42:11)? Was it not Muḥammad?"

He answered, "Yes."

The Imam continued, "How could it be that a man comes to all people and tells them that he has been sent from God and he calls them to God by His command—and that: *No vision comprehends Him* (6:103), *while they do not comprehend Him in knowledge* (20:110) and: *Nothing is as His likeness* (42:11)—but then he claims that 'I have seen Him with my eyes and have comprehended Him in knowledge; He has the form of a human being'? Have you no shame? Even the atheists could not come up with such allegation against him [the Prophet]—that he brought something from God but then brought something contrary to it from another angle."

Abū Qurrah said, "But He says: *And certainly he [the Prophet]*

1 *Al-Kāfī*, via its chain of narration, on the authority of ʿAbd-Allāh b. Sinān. *Al-Tawḥīd* has also reported this via another chain of narration from the Imam, and also from Imam al-Riḍā via its chain of narration, on the authority of Abū Hāshim al-Jaʿfarī.

saw him in another descent (53:13)."

Abū al-Ḥasan said, "The verse after that clarifies what he saw. God first says: *The heart did not deny what he saw* (53:11), meaning that Muḥammad's heart did not deny what his eyes saw. Then He tells us what he saw: *Certainly he saw of the greatest signs of his Lord* (53:18). Certainly the signs of God are not the same as God. If the eyes see God [as opposed to His signs], then it means that the person has comprehended Him in knowledge and has realized [encompassing] divine gnosis, while God says: *they do not comprehend Him in knowledge* (20:110)."

Abū Qurrah said, "So would you discard these narrations?"

Al-Riḍā said, "When these narrations are against the Qur'an, I discard them. They are also against the consensus of the Muslims that God cannot be comprehended in knowledge; that sight does not comprehend Him; and that nothing is as His likeness."[1]

Author's comment: The same idea is found in other narrations from the Imams. Yet there are some other narrations which affirm a more subtle sense of seeing God which befits His Holy Precinct. We shall present them in Sūrah al-Aʿraf [under verse 7:143]. The emphatic rejection of seeing God in this hadith is because at the time of the Imams this idea was widely interpreted as a physical vision with the physical eye, which is clearly against the explicit text of the Qur'an and solid rational proof. This can be seen in the following narration.

(23) ʿIkrimah once narrated that Ibn ʿAbbās said, "Indeed the Prophet saw his Lord."

Then someone asked, "But doesn't God say: *No vision comprehends Him* (6:103)?"

ʿIkrimah replied, "Do you not see the sky?"

The man said, "Sure I do."

He asked, "Do you see all of it?"[2]

Author's comment: There are other similar narrations that explicitly assert physical vision by the physical eye, which contravenes both rational and transmitted proofs. What ʿIkrimah missed was that if the meaning of this verse— *No vision comprehends Him* (6:103)—was that sight cannot

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1 *Al-Kāfī*, via its chain of narration.

2 *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*.

see all sides of God, then that would not be anything exclusive to Him. Rather, it equally applies to any physical thing that has multiple sides and layers, such as humans, animals and other earthly and heavenly objects. The physical eye cannot see any of these beings except the part of them that is aligned with one's view and within one's direction of sight, as discussed today in the science of optics. For example, when we see a person, we only see *some* of the many sides of his body which can be classified as above, below, front, back, right or left. It is impossible for our look to [directly] encompass the person from every side [at once]. So if the verse *No vision comprehends Him* (6:103) is meant to negate this kind of visual encompassment—which is impossible anyway, whether about God or other beings—then it would be a pointless statement.

(24) Ismāʿīl b. al-Faḍl says: Once I asked Imam Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq, "Will God be seen in the hereafter?"
He said: "God is far exalted and glorified above that! O Ibn al-Faḍl, the eyes only comprehend things that have colors and qualities, but God is the *Creator* of colors and qualities."[1]

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1 *Al-Tawḥīd*, via its chain of narration.

Verses 106-113

اتَّبِعْ ما أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ لا إِلهَ إِلاَّ هُوَ وَ أَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ وَ لَوْ شاءَ اللَّهُ ما أَشْرَكُوا وَ ما جَعَلْناكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظاً وَ ما أَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِوَكِيلٍ ﴿١٠٧﴾ وَ لا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ عَدْواً بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ كَذلِكَ زَيَّنَّا لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ عَمَلَهُمْ ثُمَّ إِلى رَبِّهِمْ مَرْجِعُهُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِما كانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٠٨﴾ وَ أَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمانِهِمْ لَئِنْ جاءَتْهُمْ آيَةٌ لَيُؤْمِنُنَّ بِها قُلْ إِنَّمَا الْآياتُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَ ما يُشْعِرُكُمْ أَنَّها إِذا جاءَتْ لا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٠٩﴾ وَ نُقَلِّبُ أَفْئِدَتَهُمْ وَ أَبْصارَهُمْ كَما لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهِ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَ نَذَرُهُمْ فِي طُغْيانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿١١٠﴾ وَ لَوْ أَنَّنا نَزَّلْنا إِلَيْهِمُ الْمَلائِكَةَ وَ كَلَّمَهُمُ الْمَوْتى وَ حَشَرْنا عَلَيْهِمْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ قُبُلاً ما كانُوا لِيُؤْمِنُوا إِلاَّ أَنْ يَشاءَ اللَّهُ وَ لكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ يَجْهَلُونَ ﴿١١١﴾ وَ كَذلِكَ جَعَلْنا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا شَياطِينَ الْإِنْسِ وَ الْجِنِّ يُوحِي بَعْضُهُمْ إِلى بَعْضٍ زُخْرُفَ الْقَوْلِ غُرُوراً وَ لَوْ شاءَ رَبُّكَ ما فَعَلُوهُ فَذَرْهُمْ وَ ما يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾ وَ لِتَصْغى إِلَيْهِ أَفْئِدَةُ الَّذِينَ لا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ وَ لِيَرْضَوْهُ وَ لِيَقْتَرِفُوا ما هُمْ مُقْتَرِفُونَ ﴿١١٣﴾

(6:114) *Follow what is revealed to you from your Lord; there is no god but He; and withdraw from the polytheists.*

(6:115) *And if Allah had willed, they would not have set up others (with Him) and We have not appointed you a keeper over them, and you are not their guardian.*

(6:116) *And do not abuse those whom they call upon besides Allah, lest exceeding the limits they should abuse Allah out of ignorance. Thus have We decorated for every people their deeds; then to their Lord shall be their return, so He will inform them of what they used to do.*

(6:117) *And they swear by Allah with the strongest of their oaths that if a sign came to them they would most certainly believe in it. Say:*

Signs are only with Allah; and what should make you know that when it comes, they will not believe?

(6:118) *And We will turn their hearts and their sight, even as they did not believe in it the first time, and We will leave them in their inordinacy, blindly wandering on.*

(6:119) *And even if We had sent down to them the angels and the dead had spoken to them and We had brought together all things before them face to face, they would not believe unless Allah wills, but most of them are ignorant.*

(6:120) *And thus did We appoint for every prophet an enemy, devils of humankind and jinn, some of them suggesting to others flashy words to deceive (them), and had your Lord willed they would not have done it. Therefore leave them and that which they forge.*

(6:121) *And that the hearts of those who do not believe in the hereafter may incline to it and that they may be well pleased with it and that they may earn what they are going to earn (of evil).*

Commentary

The connection between these verses and the previous verses is clear, without any ambiguity. The theme of discussion is *tawḥīd* (monotheism, God's oneness).

اتَّبِعْ ما أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ لا إِلهَ إِلاَّ هُوَ وَ أَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٠٦﴾

(6:106) Follow what is revealed to you from your Lord; there is no god but He; and withdraw from the polytheists.

Here the Prophet is ordered to follow what has been revealed to him from his Lord with respect to monotheism and the principles of religion. The arrogant defiance of the polytheists against submitting to the word of truth and their aversion to the religious call should not block him from delivering God's message.

Referring to God as "your Lord"—where "your" is made in exclusive reference to the Prophet—shows God's special care and attention for him.

If the verse had not clarified that *there is no god but He*, it could give the following impression: "Follow the revelation, serve your Lord, and leave them on their own to worship their lords." However, this would be an implicit approval of their polytheistic path. That is why there is an addition before *and withdraw* to prevent this misconception, where the

verse says: *there is no god but He*. This clarifies what is intended by the rest of the verse: *and withdraw….*

The meaning is: "Follow what is revealed to you from your Lord Who has utter care for you and has encompassed you in His mercy by choosing you with His revelation and assisting you with the spirit of compliance [with His revelation]. You should withdraw from these polytheists, but not in the sense that you leave them with their gods with an approving silence, because that would be an endorsement of their idolatry. Rather, there is only one god, which is the very Lord Who has revealed to you that there is no god but He!" Thus, what is meant by *withdraw from them* is: "Do not strain yourself in order to force monotheism down their throats. Do not pick up a burden that is beyond your ability. What is incumbent on you is only to convey the message. You are not a guardian or keeper over them, but their guardian and keeper is only God, and He has not willed that they shall be monotheists. Had He willed so, they would not have associated partners with Him. He has left them in their error because they turned away from the truth and proudly refused to be submit to it."

وَ لَوْ شاءَ اللَّهُ ما أَشْرَكُوا وَ ما جَعَلْناكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظاً وَ ما أَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِوَكِيلٍ ﴿١٠٧﴾

(6:107) And if Allah had willed, they would not have set up others (with Him) and We have not appointed you a keeper over them, and you are not their guardian.

This verse comforts the Prophet by saying that he should not trouble or upset himself because of their polytheism and his failure to guide them. They will never thwart God by their polytheism, for the matter is entirely up to God's will. Had He willed, they would not have set up partners with Him, but would have embraced faith willingly and voluntarily, just like how others were blessed with faith. The thing is that they waxed proud in the land, were arrogant before God and plotted schemes against Him—only to kill themselves! God returned their evil plots to themselves by depriving them of His mercy and aid which are necessary in order for one to believe and be guided.

God's established custom is to manage the universe through a system of means and causes. The world of creation (*takwīn*) is governed by the universal law of causality, meaning that God's will applies to the existence

of a being or occurrence of an event whenever its causes are present, its conditions are met, and its impediments are removed. True, God's will is unconditionally effective—meaning that if He wills something it happens, and if He does not will something it does not happen—but this is how He has willed things to work.[1]

The same custom applies to the field of legislation (*tashrīʿ*) and guidance: it is also governed by a system of causes and effects. If one seeks God's mercy, then God will show mercy to him; and if one turns away from God's mercy, then God will deprive him of His mercy. God's guidance—in the sense of showing the way to salvation—is available to everyone. It is a divine breeze of mercy that embraces anyone who exposes himself to it. It brings the best and happiest life to those who do not cut off themselves from it through iniquity, disbelief and defiance. But if one follows his own desires, opposes the truth, defies God, and starts plotting against Him and mocking His communications, then God will deprive him of felicity. In that case God will send misfortune upon the person, lead him to error despite his knowledge [of the right way], and seal his heart [against accepting the truth]. As a result, such a person will never be saved. If the divine will did not follow this custom, then the entire system of means and the law of causality would collapse. That would mean that God's will was random and vain, without any benefit, wisdom, or end. Corruption in the system of legislation would boil down to corruption in the system of creation, because legislation is ultimately rooted in creation in one way or another. Thus if there is some inconsistency in how God's legislative will works, it would trace back to some inconsistency in its root.

If God were to force the polytheists to believe, it would mean that people were no longer at the crossroad of belief and disbelief, did not have the free will required for the realization of *īmān* (believe, faith), were placed from the outset of their existence on the throne of perfection, where every person would enjoy an equal share of divine proximity and merit. In that case, education, discipline, and the message of religions would be meaningless because people would no longer differ in terms of their levels and degrees of perfection. This means that everyone would be the same in terms of traits, actions, personality and psychological capacity.

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1 In other words, the apparent means and causes are no *rivals* to God's will, but are themselves a *result* of His will. They exist and work because this is how God has willed. (Trans.)

The net effect would be a total transformation of the reality, environment and actions of human beings from their current state of existence to another system in which there is no human being or anything close to it. The reader should reflect on this.

Given the above explanation, there is no need to interpret *if Allah had willed* as forcing them to believe involuntarily. The verse is not saying that if God had willed, He would have forced them to abandon polytheism without their own volition. Rather, the verse is talking about them believing just as the believers have believed: God has willed for the believers to believe voluntarily. This idea is in fact more consonant with the two objectives of the verse: (1) to show God's absolute power; and (2) to comfort and assure the Prophet.

The meaning is: "Turn away from them and have no grudge or sorrow because of their polytheism, because God is indeed capable of decreeing belief for them. Then they would believe just as the believers believe, for God has willed so for them. In addition, you are not responsible for whether they actually believe or not, so take it easy on yourself."

The above should clarify that the last two statements in the verse—*We have not appointed you a keeper over them* and, *and you are not their guardian*—are meant to solace the Prophet. Apparently "keeper" (*ḥafiẓ*) means one who is in charge of things pertaining to their existence, such as their life, growth or sustenance. Then "guardian" (*wakīl*) means one who directs the affairs of his client on his behalf by looking after his interest and protecting him against loss. Thus, the two statements mean: "Neither their existential affairs nor their religious affairs are up to you, so that their rejection and aversion should upset you."

Some have said that "keeper" (*ḥafiẓ*) means one who attracts benefits for one who is under his protection, and "guardian" (*wakīl*) means one who deflects loss from his client. This is unlikely because what springs to mind from the term *ḥafiẓ* is specifically protecting the *existence* of something, while *wakīl* is more general than that. At the same time, it is not logical to interpret one as pertaining to existential protection and the other as including both existential and other affairs. Instead, it makes more sense to interpret one as pertaining to one aspect, and the other as pertaining to another aspect.[1]

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1 In other words, *ḥafiẓ* means "being in charge of their life and subsistence," while *wakīl* means "being responsible for their belief and actions." If *wakīl* also includes *ḥafiẓ*, then the mention of *ḥafiẓ* would be redundant. Therefore,

وَ لا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ عَدْواً بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ كَذلِكَ زَيَّنَّا لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ عَمَلَهُمْ ثُمَّ إِلى رَبِّهِمْ مَرْجِعُهُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِما كانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٠٨﴾

*(6:108) **And do not abuse*** **(tasubbū, from sabb)** ***those whom they call upon besides Allah, lest exceeding the limits*** **(ʿadwan)** ***they should abuse Allah out of ignorance. Thus have We decorated for every people their deeds; then to their Lord shall be their return, so He will inform them of what they used to do.***

The meaning of *sabb* is well known (to abuse, to curse, to revile, to blaspheme). Al-Rāghib says in *al-Mufradāt*:

> *ʿAdw* means *tajāwuz* (to transgress, to violate, to outdo). It is the opposite of *iltiyām* (to agree, to conform). Sometimes it is used with respect to the heart as *ʿadāwah* and *muʿādāh* (enmity, hostility). Sometimes it is used with respect to walking as *ʿadw* (to run, to walk fast). Sometimes it is used with respect to deviation from fairness in interactions and transactions as *ʿudwān* and *ʿadw* (injustice, aggression), as God says: *lest exceeding the limits* (ʿadwan) *they should abuse Allah out of ignorance*. Sometimes it is used with respect to one's position, as it is said *makān dhū ʿadwāʾ*, meaning "a place with uneven parts."

This verse admonishes us of an element of religious courtesy that serves to protect the honor and sanctity of holy affairs in a religious society against the defilement of sacrilege, insult, foul speech, swearing, derision and the like. Humans have an instinctive sensitivity to protect the honor of what they hold in holiness. They would take action against any infringement in this regard because they see it as a trespass on their territory. This may lead them at times to retaliate out of anger by cursing and abusing what the other side holds in highest esteem. Thus if the believers abuse the gods of the polytheists, their imprudent prejudice and ignorant bigotry would lead them to retaliate against the believers by abusing what they honor as god, which is Allah. Hence, insulting their gods would facilitate them to describe God in a way that does not befit His Precinct of Holiness and Grandeur.

… Thus have We decorated for every people their deeds …: This

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a mutually exclusive interpretation is preferred. (Trans.)

universal justification implies a universal prohibition. That is, one should refrain from *all* negative and blasphemous talk that would lead to *any* negative mention of what is sacred in Islam in *any* possible way.

… Thus have We decorated (zayyannā, from zīnah) to every people their deeds; then to their Lord shall be their return, so He will inform them of what they used to do: *Zīnah* means "something beautiful and desirable that is added to an object in order to make it more attractive and loveable to those who are interested in it." It motivates them to move toward that adornment and eventually reach the adorned object. One example is a beautiful dress that one wears in order to be stylish, but also protects the body from heat and cold.

God has willed an active life for humankind as they pursue their course on earth and experience different aspects of life in this world. They are made to recognize what is beneficial and harmful to them using their physical senses, then use their outward and inward faculties to acquire what is beneficial and deflect what is harmful. For example, people take specific steps in order to clothe themselves, find shelter, mate, eat and drink. All of these activities involve some pleasure that is tied to the desired objective of that act. The ultimate goal in all these activities is to have a happy life for which one been created—or a life that the person *thinks* to be one's true happiness. In these activities, people aim the pleasure that is associated with the act, such as carnal pleasures in eating, drinking and mating, or mental pleasures in admiration, pride, fame, vengeance, wealth, security, socializing, curing someone and surpassing others.

These pleasures are the *zīnah* (decorations, adornments) of one's actions. God has fashioned humankind in such a way that they pursue certain activities and endeavors for the sake of these pleasures. Meanwhile, the world is designed in such a way that the achievement of these pleasures is concomitant with the achievement of God's goal in the creation of humankind, such as the subsistence of the individual [through eating] and the subsistence of the human race [through mating]. For example, had it not been that there is some desirable pleasure in eating, drinking and mating, humankind would not bother themselves to endure the physical and psychological difficulties associated with these acts. That would disturb the order of life, make the individual perish, and the human race would become extinct. That would certainly ruin the wisdom behind creation.

Among these pleasures and adornments, those that are physical are

qualities which are found in the nature and essence of things, such as the various tastes of foods and the pleasure of sexual intercourse. This means that they are really [not metaphorically] attributable to God because they are part of the creation of things. They are fashioned in a way that leads to their purpose in creation, which is how God drives them to their goals. He is the One *Who gave to everything its creation, then guided it (to its goal)* (20:50).

The same can be said about the mental pleasures that serve human life in this world and do not harm it in the hereafter. They are also attributable to God because they are based on the sound *innate nature* (fiṭrah) *made by Allah in which He has made people; there is no altering of Allah's creation* (30:30). Similarly He says: *but Allah has endeared the faith to you and has decorated it in your hearts* (49:7).

There are also some mental pleasures which are based on one's base desires. They ruin a good human life, lead people away from servitude to God in this world, and cause misfortune in the hereafter. These are pleasures that deviate from sound *fiṭrah* (innate human nature), because *fiṭrah* is the divine creation of humankind. It is the innate formation that God has given to human beings in order to lead them to [eternal] felicity. The thoughts and desires that emanate from the *fiṭrah* would certainly not contravene their root. Hence, if something goes against this divine formation and fails to secure felicity, it means that it is not rooted in God's creation, but has grown out of the temptations of the devils and the desires of the ego. Such are illusory satanic pleasures of various forms of sin inasmuch as they are sins. These pleasures are decorations that are made by Satan, not by God, although they are by God's leave. He says: *but Satan decorated their deeds for them* (16:63) and He relates from Satan: *I will certainly decorate (evil) for them on earth, and I will certainly cause them all to deviate* (15:39).

These adornments cannot be directly ascribed to God because He has designed the world of creation and guided all things toward their goal and perfection. He has equipped human nature with a mental capacity to lead them to happiness and protect them against misfortune and failure. Given this initial creation and setup, God is far more exalted and holier than to come and command people to indecency, prohibit them from good and urge them to deplorable acts. That would mean commanding all people to both good and evil, and prohibiting all people from both good and evil.

That would ruin the entire system of religious duty, legislation, reward and punishment. Then how would it make sense for Him to describe such a religion as being an upright religion according to the innate nature made by Allah in which He has made people (30:30)? Our divine human nature does not accept such contradiction and the likes of it. It cannot accept the ascription of such folly and irrationality to itself.

Here one may object as follows: What is wrong with saying that God is the One Who calls people to both obedience and disobedience, in the sense that: (1) He makes those individuals that are adorned by piety and have a pure conscience do righteous deeds and obey Him; and (2) He leads those souls that are defiled by the filth of iniquity and covered by an evil conscience to sin and wrongdoing? Each would be according to the person's individual capacity and potential, but in both cases it is God Who inspires and drives the person to good or evil, obedience or disobedience.

The answer is: This is a different angle of discussion than our discussion above. This is about the intermediating causes that facilitate obedience and disobedience as mediators between God [Who is the ultimate agent behind any movement] and one's action. Certainly a person's spiritual and psychological conditions—whether good or bad—have an impact on one's obedience or disobedience. Thus obedience and disobedience would be directly attributable to these conditions, and indirectly attributable to God through His *idhn* (permission, leave, authorization). Indeed God is the One Who lets and authorizes any cause to bring about its relevant effect [whether good or evil].

Our discussion above, however, pertains to legislation of acts and what people have been called to, irrespective of the other factors that are involved in obedience and disobedience. The question is, does it make sense to say that God has instructed both belief and disbelief, or has urged people to both obedience and disobedience? He has described His religion as something upright for human societies; something that is founded on the divine nature of humankind. Religious injunctions—and psychological motivations which match them—are all according to this innate nature, while the other psychological motivations that contravene religious injunctions are against the innate human nature. These evil inclinations and motivations cannot be attributed to the sound divine nature of humankind, which means that it is impossible to attribute them to God. He says: *And when they commit an indecency they say: We found our*

fathers doing this, and Allah has enjoined it on us. Say: Surely Allah does not enjoin indecency; do you say against Allah what you do not know? Say: My Lord has enjoined justice (7:28-29).

Meanwhile, it is certainly true that God's permission (*idhn*) is behind all these, because God's kingdom is universal and His dominion is absolute. It is impossible for anyone to do anything in God's kingdom except by His leave. Therefore, whatever Satan adorns in the heart of his followers—such as polytheism, sin and anything else that leads to God's wrath in one form or another—happens with God's permission. He lets this occur to complement His custom of test and trial, which is a necessary component of His system of religious legislation and call to guidance. He says: *There is no intercessor except after His permission* (10:3); *And that He may purge those who believe and blot out the disbelievers.* (3:141). It should thus be clear that the decoration and adornment of actions can be attributed to God at a more encompassing level if we also include attribution through giving permission. In fact, the expression in the current verse—*Thus have We decorated for every people their deeds* (6:108)—refers to this universal and encompassing meaning. A closer match for this meaning can be seen in the verse: *Surely We have made whatever is on the earth an embellishment for it, so that We may try them (as to) which of them is best in works* (18:7).

Exegetes have offered various interpretations for this verse according to their view about the ascription of actions to God. Here is a list of their views, along with our evaluation:

(1) "Decoration" here means giving commands and prohibitions, or describing what is good and evil. The meaning would be: "Just as We have beautifully explained to you what you should do—O believers—We also explained beautifully for every nation before you. We told them that they should call others to God in a fair manner, should refrain from abusing the idols, and should not do things that would drive the disbelievers away from accepting the truth."

Evaluation: The problem with this interpretation is that the verse is apparently more universal than the offered meaning here, as we discussed above. There is no evidence to narrow down the meaning to what they have suggested.

(2) It means that We have decorated for every people their deeds in the sense that they naturally incline to these acts, albeit We have made the truth known to them so that they may go after the truth and refrain

from falsehood.

Evaluation: The problem with this view is that it is not sufficient to declare God clear from legislating both belief and disbelief, or obedience and disobedience. In addition to this, we must also consider Him clear from being the direct creational cause of both good and evil inclinations. These inclinations of people cannot be equally attributed to Him without any intermediary. Therefore, it is not acceptable to distinguish between *takwīnī* (existential, created) and *tashrīʿ* (legislative, commanded) inclinations, where we ascribe the former to God uniformly, but do not do so for the latter.

(3) "Decoration" here means describing rewards [for belief and good deeds]. Thus the verse is similar to His words: *but Allah has endeared the faith to you and has decorated it in your hearts, and He has made hateful to you disbelief and transgression and disobedience* (49:7). The meaning is: "He has made belief dear to you by mentioning its reward and praising those who have it, and has made disbelief detestable to you by mentioning its punishment and criticizing those who have it."

Evaluation: The problem with this interpretation is that it implicitly takes "deeds" to mean "good deeds," while there is no basis for this qualification. Moreover, this meaning is unlikely given the context of the verses and also the apparent meaning of the term *tazyīn* (decoration, adornment). Finally, "decoration" in this sense [that is, describing rewards and punishments] is not exclusive to the believers.

(4) This verse applies to all actions, both good and evil, without any qualification or intermediation. God is the One Who calls to both obedience and disobedience from the beginning, on the basis that humankind is compelled (*mujbar*, *majbūr*) in what it does.

Evaluation: The problem with this interpretation is that the verse is actually more compatible with *ikhtiyār* (free will, choice) than *ijbār* (compulsion, determinism) because it talks about "decoration." Something is decorated in order to attract someone toward it. In other words, decoration tilts the scale of one's decision in favor of one choice over another. If humans did not have the choice to do an act or refrain from it, then it would not make sense to talk about the preference of one side due to decoration. Decoration of an act is in fact a means or mechanism that is employed to make it happen by inclining the actor toward it. In Islamic nomenclature, when this decoration is used in a context of obedience

and good deeds, it is called *hidāyah* (guidance) and *tawfiq* (reconciliation, divine help, God-given success). When used in a context of disobedience and sin, it is called God's *iḍlāl* (misguidance, misleading, leaving in error) and *makr* (plot, scheme, contrivance, ruse). There is no problem in ascribing misguidance and ruse to God as long as He does not *initially begin* to do so but only does so as a retribution for their misdeeds. We have discussed these concepts in various parts of this book, and we also had a discussion on *jabr* (compulsion, determinism), *tafwīḍ* (delegation, entrustment) and *amr bayn al-amrayn* (the intermediate position between the two) under verses 2:26-27.[1]

… then to their Lord shall be their return, so He will inform them of what they used to do: This confirms what we said above: that God's decoration is a universal principle which applies to all actions, whether they are good or evil, and whether they are inward acts like belief and disbelief, or outward deeds like what is done physically. The verse is apparently saying that when people rise to perform an act, they are primarily motivated by its beautiful aspect (*zīnah*) which has been decorated in their eyes. They are inattentive of the hidden reality that lies under these adornments because of the veil of heedlessness that covers them. Then, when they return to their Lord, He will inform them of the reality of what they did, and they will see what was veiled from them before. At that point, God's friends will find things that they could never imagine: *what is hidden for them of that which will refresh the eyes* (32:17). As with Satan's friends, *what they never thought of shall become plain to them from Allah* (39:47). The realities of deeds will appear on the Day of Resurrection for both groups of people and for both types of deeds, whether good or evil.

وَ أَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمانِهِمْ لَئِنْ جاءَتْهُمْ آيَةٌ لَيُؤْمِنُنَّ بِها قُلْ إِنَّمَا الْآياتُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَ ما يُشْعِرُكُمْ أَنَّها إِذا جاءَتْ لا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٠٩﴾

(6:109) And they swear by Allah with the strongest* (jahd) *of their oaths* (aymānihim) *that if a sign came to them they would most certainly believe in it. Say: Signs are only with Allah; and what should make you know that when it comes, they will not believe?

Jahd means *ṭāqah* (ability, power, capacity). *Aymān* is the plural of

1 See volume 1 (1st ed.) of the English translation, pp. 162ff. (Trans.)

yamīn, which means *qasam* (oath, vow, pledge). *Jahd al-aymān* means "to swear as much of one is capable of; to the point of one's capacity." It means that they took exaggerated oaths and stressed as much as they could.

… Signs are only with Allah…: This means that the signs are subject to God's kingdom and dominion. No one can reach and bring them except by His leave.

The meaning is: "They swore by God and exaggerated[1] in doing so, saying that if they receive some signs from Him showing the truth of the Prophet's claim, then they will believe in that sign." Such an oath is equivalent to requesting a miracle. Then the Prophet is told to say: "Signs are only with God; He is the One Who controls and encompasses them; nothing in this regard it is up to me so that I may respond to you on my own."

… and what* (mā) *should make you know that* (anna-hā) *when it comes, they will not believe?: The last part has been recited in two ways: "they will not believe (*lā yuʾminūna*)" and "you will not believe (*lā tuʾminūna*)." According to the first recitation, the address is directed at the believers, which implies a switch of audience for rhetorical purpose. In the second recitation the address is made to the polytheists. Needless to say, the entire sentence is a continuation of what the Prophet is ordered to say.

The particle *mā* (what) in *what should make you know* is interrogative.[2] The meaning is: "What is it that would make you know the fact of the matter, which is that they will not believe even if God's signs come to them?" In other words: "These people swear by God that if they see God's signs, then they would believe in them. Perhaps you [believers] believe them and deem them to be telling the truth. However, you have no idea that even if the signs came to them, they would not believe in them, because God has not willed that they shall believe." This means that the verse makes a prediction and informs of a secret from the unseen.

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1 The verbs in the verse are in the past tense but they can also be interpreted in the present tense. The past tense would refer to a specific incident of requesting miracles, while the present tense would refer to a general and ongoing attitude of defiance. (Trans.)

2 In other words, the particle *mā* introduces a question. The other possibility here is that *mā* is a negative particle, where the meaning would be: "and you do not know that when it comes…." Both interpretations reduce to the same meaning because in the interrogative case the implied question would be rhetorical, as can be seen in the author's interpretation below. (Trans.)

Some exegetes have said that the particle *anna* (that) in *that when it comes* means *laʿalla* (maybe, perhaps).[1] However, even if one can show that "maybe" is one of the lexical meanings of *anna*, it would be a very rare and uncommon meaning, and one cannot interpret God's Book according to such definitions.

وَ نُقَلِّبُ أَفْئِدَتَهُمْ وَ أَبْصارَهُمْ كَما لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهِ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَ نَذَرُهُمْ فِي طُغْيانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿١١٠﴾

(6:110) And We will turn their hearts and their sight, even as they did not believe in it the first time, and We will leave them in their inordinacy, blindly wandering on.

Given the tone and thread of the verses, this verse interprets and explains why *they will not believe* (6:109). Therefore, the conjunction "and" shows that this verse is a continuation of the last verse. *The first time* means before the signs are sent, as opposed to a conceivable "second time" which would be after the signs are sent.

The meaning is: "Even if some signs and miracles are sent to them, they will still not believe. This is because We overturn their hearts so that they cannot comprehend with them as they should,[2] and We overturn their eyes so that they cannot see with them what they should. Hence they will not believe in the signs as they did not believe in the Qur'an[3] the first time—before these hypothetical signs and miracles were sent. We shall leave them in their transgression, wandering around in hesitation."

This is what we can say given the theme and context of the verse. Exegetes have many strange interpretations of the verse that are not worth addressing and assessing. Interested readers should refer to their appropriate sources.

وَ لَوْ أَنَّنا نَزَّلْنا إِلَيْهِمُ الْمَلائِكَةَ وَ كَلَّمَهُمُ الْمَوْتى وَ حَشَرْنا عَلَيْهِمْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ قُبُلاً

1 The meaning would be: "And what should make you know? Perhaps when it comes they will not believe." (Trans.)

2 This is based on the Qur'anic meaning and usage of "heart" (*qalb*), which is the cognitive faculty or the rational soul. (Trans.

3 This implies that the particle "it" (*bihi*) in *as they did not believe in it the first time* refers to the Qur'an, as the miracle and/or message of the Prophet's call. (Trans.)

مَا كَانُوا لِيُؤْمِنُوا إِلاَّ أَنْ يَشاءَ اللَّهُ وَ لكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ يَجْهَلُونَ ﴿١١١﴾

(6:111) And even if We had sent down to them the angels and the dead had spoken to them and We had brought together all things before them face to face, they would not believe unless Allah wills, but most of them are ignorant.

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Above we read that the polytheists claimed: *if a sign came to them they would most certainly believe in it* (6:109), and God responded by saying: *signs are only with Allah* (6:109). This verse is an explanation and elaboration of God's response. It means that their claim is rather a false statement which they only make because of being ignorant of God. They suppose that signs and miracles can be independent causes of creating belief in their hearts, planting the seeds of faith in their souls, and transforming them into believers. However, signs can only do so by God's will.

The above meaning shows that the verse involves some implied omission and concision. The verse can be elaborated as follows: "And if We were to accept their request and bring to them wonderful signs—such as: (1) sending angels upon them so that they can see them; (2) bringing the dead back to life for them so that they can meet them, talk to them, and verify the truth of what they are being called to; (3) gathering and bringing everything to them in groups, or facing them[1] so that they can testify either verbally or existentially[2]—then they would still not believe, and none of these would make them embrace faith unless God willed so."

Nothing can be a cause or means of faith in anyone except by God's will. Even though the law of causality is a universal principle that runs through the entire realm of creation with all its vastness, the causes and means in the universe are themselves needy and dependent on their Lord. They are not independent factors in any aspect of their own existence or anything that ensues from them. Anything that appears from them is necessarily by God's will, and any effect that they have can only be by His leave.

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1 Here the author is offering two possible meanings for the term *qubulan*: (1) in groups, in arrays (*qabīlan*); (2) face to face, manifestly, before their very eyes. (Trans.)

2 Verbal testimony would be through physical voices emanating from the beings miraculously, called *lisān al-qāl* (language of words). Existential testimony would be their showing the truth through their very state and mode of existence, called *lisān al-ḥāl* (language of condition or state). (Trans.)

The problem was that most polytheists—perhaps not out of defiance, but due to lack of education—were ignorant of their Lord. That is why they clung to the apparent means as sufficient causes that work independently of their Lord. Thus they supposed that if their requested signs—which are a means of belief—were granted, then they would automatically believe and follow the truth. Even though all means are needy of God, the polytheists viewed them as complete causes that exist and operate independently of Him. This is where they missed and confused the fact of the matter.

وَ كَذٰلِكَ جَعَلْنا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا شَياطِينَ الْإِنْسِ وَ الْجِنِّ يُوحِي بَعْضُهُمْ إِلى بَعْضٍ زُخْرُفَ الْقَوْلِ غُرُوراً وَ لَوْ شاءَ رَبُّكَ ما فَعَلُوهُ فَذَرْهُمْ وَ ما يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾

(6:112) And thus did We appoint for every prophet an enemy, devils* (shayāṭīn) *of humankind and jinn* (al-jinn)*, some of them suggesting* (yūḥī, from waḥy) *to others flashy words* (zukhruf al-qawl) *to deceive (them)* (ghurūran)*, and had your Lord willed they would not have done it. Therefore leave them and that which they forge.

Shayāṭīn is the plural of *shayṭān*. Its lexical meaning is "evil being" (*sharīr*), but it is mostly used in the Qur'an for Iblīs (Satan) and his descendants. *Jinn* is from the root *jann*, which means "to cover, to hide, to conceal." In the Qur'an's nomenclature, it refers to a kind of creatures which are intelligent, have free will, and are hidden from our senses because of their nature. According to the Qur'an, Satan (Iblīs) is one of them, and they are different from the angels..

Waḥy means "indirect speech or communication through hinting, intimation and the like." *Zukhruf* means "decoration" or "something that is adorned." Therefore, *zukhruf al-qawl* means "speech that is embellished but misguiding; words that resemble the truth but are not true." *Ghurūran* (to deceive, deceptively) is an absolute object (*mafʿūl muṭlaq*) for an implied omitted verb of the same root, or an intended object (*mafʿūl lahu*).[1]

The meaning is: "Not only for you, but for all prophets did We appoint some enemy from the humankind and jinn. Some of them hint to others with decorated speech and misleading words, and thus they deceive

1 The current translation is according to the second possibility. Based on the first possibility the implied meaning would be: "deceiving them a deception." (Trans.)

them—or in order to deceive and mislead them." The hints of jinn devils to human devils would be their whispers, insinuations and temptations. The hints of human devils among themselves would be their mutual enticements and their secret exchange of plots.

… and had your Lord willed they would not have done it…: This sentence refers to the universality of God's will (*mashiyyah*, *mashīʾah*). Just as signs and miracles cannot have any impact in one's belief except by God's will [as mentioned in the last verse], the enmity of devils against the prophets and their hinting of decorated, deceiving words to one another are also all by God's permission. Had God willed otherwise, they would not have shown any enmity and would not have suggested anything to one another, in which case they would not be the enemies of the prophets. This sentence connects the verse to the previous verse because both of them state that all affairs hinge on God's will and leave.

Therefore leave them and that which they forge: This is a conclusion that is drawn from the supremacy of God's will. It means: "Given that their enmity, mischief and whispers are all by God's leave, that they cannot thwart God's dominating and authoritative will. Hence do not let their mischief and disruption [against your call] upset you, but leave them with whatever they forge against God such as the claim that He has partners."

Given the above, *and had your Lord willed they would not have done it. Therefore leave them and that which they forge* (6:112) is equivalent to what was said before: *and withdraw from the polytheists. And if Allah had willed, they would not have set up others (with Him)* (6:106-107).

And thus did We appoint for every prophet an enemy, devils of humankind and jinn …: This statement apparently ascribes the assignment of the prophets' enemies to God. These enemies are the means that facilitate evil, sin and polytheism, while God is clear from all evil. Similarly, the next verse says *and that the hearts of those who do not believe in the hereafter may incline to it…* (6:113), which introduces certain sins and aberrations as part of God's objectives in His call to truth. These statements are similar to ascribing the decoration of deeds to God in the verse: *Thus have We decorated for every people their deeds* (6:108). We presented the correct interpretation of this above.

For these two verses [6:112-113], exegetes have offered various interpretations based on their belief about the ascription of actions to God, much like the verse about God's decoration of deeds [6:108]. The reader should know by now that the Qur'an clearly states that anything that can be called a "thing" (*shayʾ*) belongs to God and is attributable to Him,

without any exception. Yet, there are some verses that declare God's Holy Precinct to be clear and free from every wrong and evil. Therefore, it can be concluded that:

All blessings and good deeds depend on God's will and are ascribable to Him either directly or indirectly [that is, either with or without intermediaries].

Evil and sin are directly attributable to other-than-Him, such as Satan or the ego.

Evil and sin are indirectly attributable to God, through His [existential and creational] permission.

In other words, it is by God's permission that evil exists and sins occur. He gives permission to these events as necessary implications of His trial of humankind, so that the divine call which comprises of commands, prohibitions, rewards and punishments may be complete. Otherwise, God's custom would be void and inconsistent. His custom is to direct humankind toward their growth just as He directs all other beings toward their perfection, in a world where growth and perfection can only be achieved through a gradual process.

وَ لِتَصْغى إِلَيْهِ أَفْئِدَةُ الَّذِينَ لا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ وَ لِيَرْضَوْهُ وَ لِيَقْتَرِفُوا ما هُمْ مُقْتَرِفُونَ ﴿١١٣﴾

(6:113) And that the hearts of those who do not believe in the hereafter may incline to it and that they may be well pleased with it and that they may earn* (li-yaqtarifū, from iqtirāf) *what they are going to earn (of evil).

Iqtirāf means *iktisāb* (to earn, to acquire). The singular pronoun "it" in *incline to it* refers to *waḥy* (suggestion, hint) which was mentioned in the last verse [in *some of them suggesting to others*]. "That the hearts may incline" is mentioned as an end and objective [for what was said in the last verse]. The conjunction "and" at the beginning of the verse shows that this objective is joined to some other omitted objective. The implied meaning is: "We did what We did and willed what We willed—that is, We did not prevent the enemies of the Prophets from hinting embellished, misleading words to each other—for four purposes: (1) some secret objectives which are not mentioned; (2) that the hearts of those who do not believe in the hereafter may incline to those words; (3) that they may accept those words and be pleased with them; and (3) that they may acquire what they

shall acquire." All of these results in their wretchedness in the hereafter, which is what they call for by how they have prepared themselves.[1] Indeed God aids both people of salvation and people of wretchedness to fill their capacity and complete their journey toward the destinations which they are heading for. He gives them what they request by their readiness and disposition (*lisān al-istiʿdād*). He says: *All do We aid—these as well as those—out of the bounty of your Lord, and the bounty of your Lord is not confined* (17:20).

Examining Narrations

(1) Al-Suddī says: When Abū Ṭālib was about to die, the people of the Quraysh [tribe] said to each other: "Let us go to this man [Abū Ṭālib] and order him to tell his nephew [Muḥammad] to keep away from us. It will be disgraceful for us to kill him [Muḥammad] after Abū Ṭālib's death, because the Arabs would then say that the man used to defend his nephew, but as soon as he died they killed him."

Thus a group of them—including Abū Sufyān, Abū Jahl, al-Naḍr b. al-Ḥārith, Umayyah b. Khalaf, Ubayy b. Khalaf, ʿUqbah b. Abī Muʿayṭ, ʿAmrw b. al-ʿĀṣ and al-Aswad b. al-Bakhtarī—went there. They sent one of them named al-Muṭṭalib to ask permission from Abū Ṭālib for them to see him. He went to Abū Ṭālib and said, "The chiefs of your people have come to see you." Abū Ṭālib gave them permission to enter.

They entered and said to him, "O Abā Ṭālib! You are our elder and master! Indeed Muḥammad has caused trouble for us and insulted our gods. We would like you to call him and forbid him from mentioning our gods any more. In return, we will also leave him to have his god."

Abū Ṭālib summoned the Prophet. When he came, Abū Ṭālib told him, "These are your people and cousins."

The Messenger of God said, "What do they want?"

"We want you," they replied, "to leave us with our gods, and we shall leave you with your god."

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1 In other words, they "request" damnations because their state of being—which is determined by their beliefs and actions—is only compatible with wretchedness in the hereafter. This is their *lisān al-ḥāl* (language of condition or state). (Trans.)

> The Prophet said, "If I give you this, would you give me a speech that would make you rule over Arabs and would make non-Arabs yield to you and pay you tribute?"
> Abū Jahl replied, "By your father we shall certainly give you that speech and ten more like it! What is it?"
> He said, "Say: there is no god but Allah!"
> Upon hearing this, they refused and grimaced in disgust.
> Abū Ṭālib said [to Muḥammad], "Ask something else! Your people are appalled by this."
> He replied, "My uncle! I am not a person who would ever say something else—unless they bring the sun and place it in my hand." Then he added, wanting to disappoint them from their request: "Even if they bring the sun and put in my hand I shall not say anything else."
> They were incensed and said, "Either you stop swearing at our gods or else we shall swear at you and the One Who commands you."
> Thus God revealed: *And do not abuse those whom they call upon besides Allah, lest exceeding the limits they should abuse Allah out of ignorance* (6:108).[1]

Author's comment: As one can see, the last part of this narration does not match its first part. Their request was that the Prophet should "keep away from their gods," which means that he should not prohibit the people from seeking favor with these gods, and should not urge them to abandon the idols. Then, when they despaired of his concession, they threatened him by saying that they would swear at his god if he swears at their gods. However, for their speech to be consistent and have a natural connection, they should have threatened him for not stopping his mission, not to leave his mission aside and talk about swearing and intimidating him for it. Moreover, the verse makes no mention of the first part of this account which is the main part. Furthermore, given the Prophet's gravity and magnificent ethics in his interactions, he would never use profanity.

It is true that according to some accounts, he did *laʿn* (curse, imprecation) with respect to some chiefs of Quraysh by saying, "O God, curse so-and-so and so-and-so."[2] Likewise, there are many imprecations in the

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1 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of Ibn Abī Ḥātim.

2 Given the literal meaning of *laʿn*, this means: "O God, keep him far from your mercy. Do not show mercy to him." (Trans.)

Book of God, such as: *Allah has cursed them because of their disbelief* (4:46); *May he be cursed how he plotted* (74:19); *Cursed be man* (80:17); *Fie on you and on what you serve besides Allah* (21:67). However, all of these are prayers and supplications (*duʿāʾ*), not swearing in the sense of obscene and offensive words that one utters in order to insult someone. Swearing is rather a description that reflects one's imagination. Even when God says things like *forbidder of good, outstepping the limits, sinful, coarse-grained, besides ignoble* (68:12-13), what is meant is not to be insulting, but to describe a reality.[1]

Instead, what seems more likely is that the ordinary believers in the Prophet's message sometimes engaged in debates and quarrels with the polytheists, and sometimes this led them to insult and abuse their gods, which is something that commonly occurs in the debates of ordinary people. Thus God forbade them from doing so. This can be seen in the next narration.

(2) Once Imam al-Ṣādiq was asked about the Prophet's hadith: "Indeed polytheism is more hidden than the walking of an ant on a black smooth rock in a pitch-dark night." The Imam said: "[Some] believers used to abuse what the polytheists worshiped besides God, which led the polytheists to abuse what the believers worshiped. Then God forbade the believers from abusing their gods so that the infidels would not abuse the God of believers. Otherwise the believers would have fallen into polytheism unknowingly.[2] Thus He revealed: *And do not abuse those whom they call upon besides Allah, lest exceeding the limits they should*

1 The difference is that in swearing, one employs offensive and insulting words in order to express his resentment. The words are not meant as a literal description of an external reality, but only reflect the speaker's disgust and feeling. However, the Qur'anic words, albeit bitter, are a description of a base quality or deviation. When a physician says to to someone how ill they are, he does not intend to insult the person, but he says it out of compassion and sincerity. Nor does the person feel offended or take it personally. Another example is saying "donkey" to refer to a donkey or to refer to a human being. The former is an impartial observation while the latter is an insult. (Trans.)

2 This shows that polytheism here is not meant as merely associating partners with God, but is meant in a more general sense that also includes insulting God. (Trans.)

abuse Allah out of ignorance (6:108).[1]

(3) ʿAmrw al-Ṭayālisī says: Once I asked Imam al-Ṣādiq about the verse *And do not abuse…* (6:108). He said, "O ʿAmrw! Have you ever seen anyone abuse God?"
I said, "So what does it mean? May I be your ransom!"
He explained, "One who abuses a friend (*walī*) of God has indeed abused God."[2]

(4) Muḥammad b. Kaʿb al-Qurazī says: Once when the Messenger of God was talking to the Quraysh they told him, "O Muḥammad! You tell us that Moses had a staff with which he would strike the rock [and it would give water]; Jesus used to bring the dead back to life; and Thamūd had a she-camel [as a miracle]. Bring one of these signs for us so that we accept what you say."
The Messenger of God said, "What would you like me to bring for you?"
They answered, "We want you to turn Mount Ṣafā into gold for us."
"If I do so," he said, "will you then believe in me?"
They replied, "Of course! By God if you do this, we will all follow you."
So the Messenger of God got up to pray for this, but then Gabriel came to him and said, "If you wish, the Mount will turn into gold, but if they then do not believe in you, we will surely punish them [by destroying them]. And if you want, you can leave them so that the repenters among them may repent."
He replied, "I would rather let their repenters repent."
Then God revealed: *And they swear by Allah with the strongest of their oaths… but most of them are ignorant* (6:109-111).[3]

Author's comment: Given the content of these verses, the above account cannot be the cause of their revelation. As we said above, the verses are apparently saying that these people will not believe in any sign and miracle that is shown to them. They will not put polytheism away even

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1 *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, on the authority of his father, on the authority of Masʿadat b. Ṣadaqah.

2 *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*.

3 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of Ibn Jarīr.

if they receive every possible miracle—unless God wills that they would believe, but He has not willed so [because of their insolence]. Given this sense, how could it comply with the part of the above narration where Gabriel says, "If you wish the Mount will turn into gold, but if they then do not believe in you, we will surely punish them [by destroying them]. And if you want, you can leave them so that the repenters among them may repent"?

Instead, these verses are apparently equivalent to the verse: *Surely those who disbelieve, it is alike whether you warn them, or do not warn them—they will not believe* (2:6). They suggest that there were some chief polytheists who demanded miracles other than the Qur'an, and solemnly swore that if they received such miracles, they would believe in the Prophet. God refutes their claim in these verses and says that they will never believe because God has not willed this for them—as a punishment [for their misdeeds].

(5) Concerning verse 6:110 (*And We will turn their hearts and their sight…*) Imam al-Bāqir said: It means that We overturn their hearts such that the bottom will be on top, and We turn their sight blind so that they will be unable to discern guidance.[1]

(6) ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib said: Indeed the first form of jihad (struggle, battle) in which you will be defeated is jihad by your hands, then jihad by your tongues, and then jihad by your hearts. At that point, if one's heart does not appreciate good and does not reject evil, [it means that] his heart has been overturned such that its bottom has come on the top. Then he will never accept any good.[2]

Author's comment: What is meant here is the overturning of psychological cognition, where one follows an exactly opposite path: he follows his desires and turns away from sound reason which is supposed to control and balance surges of bestial faculties.

(7) It is narrated from Imams al-Bāqir and al-Ṣādiq that *even as they did not believe in it the first time* (6:110) refers to when God made a covenant with the people.[3]

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1 *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, on the authority of Abū Jārūd.

2 *Tafsīr al-Qummī*.

3 *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, on the authority of Zurārah, Ḥumrān and Muḥammad b. Muslim.

Author's comment: We shall have a separate chapter on the covenant (*mīthāq*) under the verse: *And when your Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, from their backs, their descendants…* (7:172). It should be noted here that as we explained above, the apparent meaning of not believing *the first time* is not believing in the Qur'an the first time that it was presented to them.

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Verses 114-121

أَ فَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ أَبْتَغِي حَكَماً وَ هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكِتابَ مُفَصَّلاً وَ الَّذِينَ آتَيْناهُمُ الْكِتابَ يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ مُنَزَّلٌ مِنْ رَبِّكَ بِالْحَقِّ فَلا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ ﴿١١٤﴾ وَ تَمَّتْ كَلِمَةُ رَبِّكَ صِدْقاً وَ عَدْلاً لا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِماتِهِ وَ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿١١٥﴾ وَ إِنْ تُطِعْ أَكْثَرَ مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ يُضِلُّوكَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ إِنْ يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلاَّ الظَّنَّ وَ إِنْ هُمْ إِلاَّ يَخْرُصُونَ ﴿١١٦﴾ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ مَنْ يَضِلُّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١١٧﴾ فَكُلُوا مِمَّا ذُكِرَ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ بِآياتِهِ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١١٨﴾ وَ ما لَكُمْ أَلاَّ تَأْكُلُوا مِمَّا ذُكِرَ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَ قَدْ فَصَّلَ لَكُمْ ما حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِلاَّ مَا اضْطُرِرْتُمْ إِلَيْهِ وَ إِنَّ كَثِيراً لَيُضِلُّونَ بِأَهْوائِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُعْتَدِينَ ﴿١١٩﴾ وَ ذَرُوا ظاهِرَ الْإِثْمِ وَ باطِنَهُ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْسِبُونَ الْإِثْمَ سَيُجْزَوْنَ بِما كانُوا يَقْتَرِفُونَ ﴿١٢٠﴾ وَ لا تَأْكُلُوا مِمَّا لَمْ يُذْكَرِ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَ إِنَّهُ لَفِسْقٌ وَ إِنَّ الشَّياطِينَ لَيُوحُونَ إِلى أَوْلِيائِهِمْ لِيُجادِلُوكُمْ وَ إِنْ أَطَعْتُمُوهُمْ إِنَّكُمْ لَمُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٢١﴾

(6:114) *Shall I then seek a judge other than Allah? And He it is Who has revealed to you the Book (which is) well-elaborated; and those whom We have given the Book know that it is revealed by your Lord with truth; therefore, you should not be of the disputers.*

(6:115) *And the word of your Lord has been accomplished truly and justly; there is none who can change His words, and He is the Hearing, the Knowing.*

(6:116) *And if you obey most of those in the earth, they will lead you astray from Allah's way; they follow but uncertainty and they only speculate.*

(6:117) *Surely your Lord—He best knows who goes astray from His way, and He best knows those who follow the right course.*

(6:118) *Therefore eat of that on which Allah's name has been mentioned if you are believers in His communications.*

(6:119) *And what reason have you that you should not eat of that on which Allah's name has been mentioned, and He has already well-elaborated to you what He has forbidden to you—excepting what you are compelled to; and most surely many would lead (people) astray by their low desires out of ignorance; surely your Lord—He best knows those who exceed the limits.*

(6:120) *And abandon the outward sin and the inward; surely they who earn sin shall be recompensed with what they earned.*

(6:121) *And do not eat of that on which Allah's name has not been mentioned, and that is most surely a transgression; and most surely the devils suggest to their friends that they should contend with you; and if you obey them, you shall most surely be polytheists.*

Introduction

These verses are connected to the previous verses, as indicated by the letter *fāʾ* (so, then, thus) at the beginning of the first verse: *Shall I then seek a judge other than* (a-fa-ghayr)… (6:114). At the same time, there is another thread that connects these eight verses together since they talk about the following points which build on one another:

(1) One should not follow any rule but God's, for indeed He has elaborated His rules in His Book [6:114-115];

(2) One should not follow the people [6:114-115];

(3) Obeying the people leads one astray, because they only follow what is uncertain and because their acts are based on speculation and approximation [6:116];

(4) The polytheists are the friends of devils [6:121];

(5) They argue with the believers about eating carrion [6:121];

(6) One should only eat what has been slaughtered in God's name, and should refrain from eating what has not been slaughtered in God's name [6:119-121]; and

(7) This is what God has elaborated in His Book and approves of for His servants [6:119].

All of the above comply with the following narration from Ibn ʿAbbās: The polytheists argued with the Prophet and the believers concerning carrion, saying: "How come you eat what you have killed yourselves but

you do not eat what God has killed?" Thus these verses were revealed.

Therefore, the purpose of these verses is to explain the difference between the two and to establish God's rule.

Commentary

أَ فَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ أَبْتَغِي حَكَماً وَ هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكِتابَ مُفَصَّلاً وَ الَّذِينَ آتَيْناهُمُ الْكِتابَ يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ مُنَزَّلٌ مِنْ رَبِّكَ بِالْحَقِّ فَلا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ ﴿١١٤﴾

*(6:114) **Shall I then seek a judge** (**ḥakaman**) **other than Allah? And He it is Who has revealed to you the Book (which is) well-elaborated** (**mufaṣṣalan**); **and those whom We have given the Book know that it is revealed by your Lord with truth; therefore, you should not be of the disputers.***

Majmaʿ al-bayān says:

Ḥakam and *ḥākim* mean the same (judge, ruler, arbiter). The difference is that *ḥakam* has a more positive connotation, because it means one who deserves to be referred to for judgment. Hence, it is one who only judges the truth, while a *ḥākim* sometimes rules otherwise….

Tafṣīl means "to clarify the meaning by avoiding confusion and ambiguities that make the meaning obscure or make the expression not convey the desired idea."

The letter *fāʾ* at the beginning of the verse ("then" in *Shall I then seek a judge*) shows that what is said here is a conclusion and consequence of the above-mentioned "clear proofs" (*baṣāʾir*) which have come from God [6:104]. It was also stated above that this Qur'an is a blessed book which He has sent down and which confirms the Torah and the Gospel which were sent before it [6:92].

The meaning is: "Should I seek anyone other than Allah—from the gods that you worship or their supposed affiliates[1]—to be my judge so that I may follow his rule, while Allah is the One Who has sent this Book, the Qur'an? It is a Book that is well-elaborated: its diverse teachings are well

1 "The gods that your worship" would be the transcendent beings—such as the angels, the jinn and the human saints—that the polytheists viewed as the primary associates of God. "Their supposed affiliates" would be the idols and images that they had made as representations of those original gods. (Trans.)

distinguished from one another, without any confusion between its parts. Only one with such a description [as Allah] is worthy of judgment."

Hence, the verse is similar to these verses: *And Allah judges with the truth; and those whom they call upon besides Him cannot judge aught; surely Allah is the Hearing, the Seeing* (40:20); *Is He then Who guides to the truth more worthy to be followed, or he who himself does not go aright unless he is guided?* (10:35).

… and those whom We have given the Book know that it is revealed by your Lord with truth; therefore, you should not be of the disputers: This part is addressed to the Prophet in order to consolidate and encourage him in what he says to the polytheists. It assures him that the Book which has been sent to him has been sent from his Lord with truth. Therefore, this statement involves a switch of address as an aside or parenthetical remark that serves two purposes: (1) it gives strength and solace to the Prophet; and (2) it makes it plain to the polytheists that the Prophet is following a clear proof with regards to his message.

"With truth" is a description of *what is revealed by your Lord*. The Book has been revealed "with truth," as opposed to being an inspiration or temptation from the devils, or being the speech of soothsayers. Thus it is similar to the verse: *Shall I inform you (of him) upon whom the devils descend? They descend upon every lying, sinful one* (26:221-222). Likewise it is not a divine revelation that has been adulterated with some falsehood by the devils. God insured His Messenger against that by verses like: *The Knower of the unseen! He does not reveal His secrets to any, except to him whom He chooses as a messenger; for surely He makes a guard to march before him and after him, so that He may know that they have truly delivered the messages of their Lord* (72:26-28).

وَ تَمَّتْ كَلِمَةُ رَبِّكَ صِدْقاً وَ عَدْلاً لا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِماتِهِ وَ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿١١٥﴾

(6:115) And the word* (kalimah) *of your Lord has been accomplished truly* (ṣidqan) *and justly* (ʿadlan)*; there is none who can change His words* (kalimāt)*, and He is the Hearing, the Knowing.

Kalimah is a speech that conveys either a complete or incomplete meaning.[1] One of the Qur'anic usages of this term is to denote God's definite decree to fulfill His promise. Some examples for this are:

1 The former would be a sentence, while the latter would be a word or phrase. (Trans.)

(1) *And had not a word already gone forth from your Lord, the matter would have certainly been decided between them* (10:19), where "word" refers to what God decreed to Adam upon his fall: *And there is for you in the earth an abode and a provision for a time* (2:36).

(2) *Those against whom the word of your Lord has proved true* (10:96), where "word" refers to God's promise to Satan: *That I will most certainly fill hell with you and with those among them who follow you, all* (38:85). This "word" has also been interpreted elsewhere as follows: *and the word of your Lord is fulfilled: Certainly I will fill hell with the jinn and men, all together* (11:119).

(3) *And the good word of your Lord was fulfilled in the children of Israel because they bore (sufferings) patiently* (7:137), where "word" refers to His promise to deliver the Israelites from Pharaoh and make them inherit the land, as He says: *And We want to bestow a favor upon those who were deemed weak in the land, and to make them the Imams, and to make them the heirs* (28:5).

Another Qur'anic usage of the term is for external (created) beings such as humans. For example He says: *Surely Allah gives you good news of a Word from Him (of one) whose name is the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary* (3:45). Jesus is called the "word" of God in the sense that he was created not through a gradual process, but suddenly with the creative word of God, as He says: *Surely the likeness of Jesus is with Allah as the likeness of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him, Be, and he was* (3:59).

Given the theme and context of the current verses of discussion, apparently what is meant by "word" here—*and the word of your Lord has been accomplished truly and justly*—is the message of Islam and what was accompanied with it, such as the prophethood of Muḥammad and the revelation of Qur'an as a Book that encompasses the previous scriptures and embraces the main principles and divine teachings that were found in the previous religions. This relates to Abraham's supplication when he was building the Kaʿbah [with Ishmael]: *Our Lord! And raise up in them a Messenger from among them who shall recite to them Thy communications and teach them the Book and the wisdom, and purify them* (2:129).

There was indeed mention of this [that is, Islam, Prophet Muḥammad, and the Qur'an] in the previous scriptures, as God says: *Those who follow the unschooled [or Meccan] messenger-prophet, whom they find written down in the Torah and the Gospel with them* (7:157). The same idea can

be deduced from the previous verse: *and those whom We have given the Book know that it is revealed by your Lord with truth* (6:114). There are as many other verses in this regard such as: *Those whom We have given the Book recognize him as they recognize their sons* (2:146).

Therefore, "accomplishment of the word" means that this "word"—that is, the call and message of Islam—was finally established and realized by the prophethood of Muḥammad and the revelation of Qur'an as a scripture that encompasses all other scriptures. It fully materialized after a long period of gradual development from one prophet to another, and from one religion to another. The noble verses of the Qur'an suggest that Islam includes the essence of the previous religions and more, as God says: *He has made plain to you of the religion what He enjoined upon Noah and that which We have revealed to you and that which We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus* (42:13). God knows best.

This should clarify what is meant by "accomplishment of the word." It refers to the gradual progression of God's religion and law from imperfection toward perfection, which culminated in the Muhammedan religion. God says: *He it is Who sent His Messenger with the guidance and the true religion, that He may make it overcome the religions, all of them, though the polytheists may be averse* (61:9).

This word was accomplished with two qualities: *ṣidqan* (truly, in truth, by truth) and *ʿadlan* (justly). The former means that this is a call whose contents and descriptions fully unfold and materialize externally. The latter means that it is fair and balanced: its parts do not contradict one another, and it weighs everything by its true measure without any error, lack or injustice. The verse then interprets these two qualifications—"truly" and "justly"—by adding: *there is none who can change His words* (6:115). In other words, this is an irrevocable divine call, meaning that it cannot be changed whatsoever, whether by God Himself or by others. There is no alteration from God's part because once He decrees something He does not change His mind, and if He makes a promise He will surely fulfill it. Nor can others change it because no other being can overcome God and force Him to act contrary to His will. Thus God's word is a "true" word, meaning that it occurs externally exactly as God has decreed. It is also a "just" word, meaning that it maintains the internal balance that was given to it by God. This means that the second sentence—*there is none who can change His words*—explains and justifies the two qualities: *truly and justly*.

Here are a few other interpretations for the verse suggested by the exegetes:

Kalimah (word) and *kalimāt* (words) in this verse refer to the Qur'an.

Kalimah refers to the Qur'an, and *kalimāt* refers to the Qur'an's content with the exception of its legal rulings. The exception is because the Qur'an's legal rulings are subject to abrogation, while God says here: *there is none who can change His words*.

Kalimah here means "religion."

Kalimah here means "God's proof and argument."

Ṣidq (truth) pertains to the stories and reports in the Qur'an, while *ʿadl* (justice, fairness) refers to its laws and rulings.

… and He is the Hearing, the Knowing: There are a few possible interpretations for these two qualities: (1) He hears and responds to you when you call Him for your needs, and He knows your true needs. (2) He hears about what happens in His kingdom through the intermediation of His messenger angels, and He also knows about these events without any intermediary. (3) He hears what you say, and He knows what you do.

وَ إِنْ تُطِعْ أَكْثَرَ مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ يُضِلُّوكَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ إِنْ يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلاَّ الظَّنَّ وَ إِنْ هُمْ إِلاَّ يَخْرُصُونَ ﴿١١٦﴾

(6:116) And if you obey most of those in the earth, they will lead you astray from Allah's way; they follow but uncertainty and they only speculate **(yakhruṣūn, from kharṣ).**

Kharṣ means either *kadhib* (to lie) or *takhmīn* (to guess, to speculate, to surmise).[1] The second meaning better complies with the context of the verse. This is because the subsequent part of the verse—*they follow but uncertainty and they only speculate*—serves to explain and clarify why *if you obey most of those in the earth, they will lead you astray from Allah's way*. This should not be a surprise, because one will naturally go astray if one follows conjecture and speaks speculatively in matters that should only be based on knowledge and certainty—such as one's understanding of God and His legal rulings.

1 According to *Tāj al-ʿArūs*, any speculative speech is called *kharṣ*, and since such speech is often inaccurate, the term is also used for a lie. Thus the original and root meaning is the latter, which is also the author's preferred definition. (Trans.)

In terms of worldly affairs, one cannot dispense with speculation and estimation. If one turns to conventional social studies that discuss, classify and analyze different causes that affect the life, behavior and psychology of human beings, one will realize that pure knowledge and sheer certainty are very rare—except for some general theoretical principles at the root, which one has no choice but to accept and rely on.

However, all of these are particular worldly matters, where speculation and approximation are acceptable. But when it comes to true human felicity (which means the happiness and salvation of our species) and true human wretchedness (which means eternal loss and damnation) then there is no place for relying on speculation and estimation. The same goes with matters that contribute to realizing our means of felicity and wretchedness, such as our view of the world and its Creator, the purpose of creation, resurrection and afterlife, prophethood, scripture and divine law. In these matters, God only approves of knowledge and certainty from His servants. There are truly many verses in this regard, such as: *And do not follow that of which you have not any knowledge* (17:36).

A clear piece of evidence for this requirement is our current verse of discussion. It says that one cannot be excused for following most of the people in earth in what they subscribe to and preach concerning God's path and the way of serving Him *because* they predominantly rely on speculation and estimation. One needs to have assurance with regards to his relationship with God, which is a servant-lord relationship. Speculation fails to achieve this because it is inseparable from ignorance and is no source of confidence. One cannot serve his lord [properly] if he is ignorant that lord and what he demands from his servants.

This is a clear rule of reason which God has confirmed, as we see in the next verse: *Surely your Lord—He best knows who goes astray from His way, and He best knows those who follow the right course* (6:117). In this verse God refers to His God's knowledge—and not to the rule of reason—to justify the message of the current verse [that one should not follow speculation].

Elsewhere God says: *And they have no knowledge of it; they do not follow anything but uncertainty, but surely uncertainty does not avail against the truth at all* (53:28), which refers to the rule of reason in this regard. Then He confirms this by matching it with what His knowledge decrees: *Therefore turn aside from him who turns his back upon Our reminder and does not desire anything but this world's life. That is their goal of knowledge; surely your Lord knows best him who goes astray from His path and He*

knows best him who follows the right direction (53:29-30).

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ مَنْ يَضِلُّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١١٧﴾

*(6:117) **Surely your Lord—He best knows** (aʿlam) **who** (man) **goes astray from His way, and He best knows those who** (bi-man) **follow the right course.***

Concerning a comparative or superlative adjective like *aʿlam* (knows better, knows best), it has been said that when the other side of comparison is not mentioned, it can either mean a comparative adjective or an absolute one. In this verse both meanings are plausible. In terms of real and independent knowledge about those who go astray and those who are guided, it only belongs to God. He has no partner in such knowledge in its real and original sense so that He may know "better" than them.[1] However, in terms of knowledge in an unconditional sense—which would include what one knows independently and what knows through God's grace and teaching—then *aʿlam* would have a comparative or superlative meaning, because what others know about those who go astray and those who are guided is only as much as He bestows upon them.

… and He best knows those who (bi-man) follow the right course: The appearance of the letter *bāʾ* in *bi-man* in this part of the verse indicates that the same letter is implied in the first part of the verse where it says: *He best knows who* (man) *goes astray*. This can be confirmed by a verse from Sūrah al-Najm which we just quoted above [53:30].[2]

فَكُلُوا مِمَّا ذُكِرَ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ بِآياتِهِ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١١٨﴾

*(6:118) **Therefore eat of that on which Allah's name has been mentioned if you are believers in His communications.***

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1 The meaning would be: "Only God knows" or "God is the Knower," where *aʿlam* (which is in the comparative form) is interpreted as *ʿalīm* (as an absolute adjective). (Trans.)

2 This paragraph is a purely Arabic discussion. Readers not familiar with Arabic can simply skip it. The author is drawing a subtle lesson about the usage of the verb *ʿalima* (to know) in Arabic by comparing the two parts of this verse and also matching it with verse 53:30. The conclusion is that according to the Qur'an, the proper use of the verb *ʿalima* (to know) is to use it with the particle *bāʾ* (of, about, to). However, this particle is sometimes omitted because it is implied. (Trans.)

The previous verses serve as premises which imply that God is the One Who deserves to be obeyed more than anyone else. Thus two conclusions are made: (1) One should follow the rules that God has enacted. This conclusion is mentioned in the current verse. (2) One should dismiss what others claim to be lawful based on their desires and without any knowledge. This refers to those who are inspired by the devils to dispute with the believers, as discussed below: *And do not eat of that on which Allah's name has not been mentioned…* (6:121).

The main focus of these four verses [6:118-121] is to convey these two points. The other points are in service of them and meant to clarify this primary import. The main message is twofold: (1) *Therefore eat of that on which Allah's name has been mentioned* (6:118); (2) *And do not eat of that on which Allah's name has not been mentioned* (6:121). In other words: "You should distinguish between what legally counts as slaughtered (*mudhakká*) and what legally counts as carrion (*maytah*) by eating the former, but not the latter—even if the polytheists dispute with you over this distinction."

Therefore eat of that on which Allah's name has been mentioned …: The word "therefore" (the letter *fā'*) shows that this ruling is drawn as a conclusion from the previous discussion. That is why it is followed by: *if you are believers in His communications*.

That on which Allah's name has been mentioned means "a slaughtered offering [for God]."

وَ ما لَكُمْ أَلاَّ تَأْكُلُوا مِمَّا ذُكِرَ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَ قَدْ فَصَّلَ لَكُمْ ما حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِلاَّ مَا اضْطُرِرْتُمْ إِلَيْهِ وَ إِنَّ كَثِيراً لَيُضِلُّونَ بِأَهْوائِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُعْتَدِينَ ﴿١١٩﴾

(6:119) And what reason have you that you should not eat of that on which Allah's name has been mentioned, and He has already well-elaborated to you what He has forbidden to you—except what you are compelled to; and most surely many would lead (people) astray by their low desires out of ignorance; surely your Lord—He best knows those who exceed the limits.

This is an elaboration of the concise conclusion in the previous verse. It means: "Indeed God has well-elaborated what is forbidden to you, excepting emergencies. Things that have been slaughtered in God's name are not among what He has forbidden. Therefore, there is no problem in

eating them. Yet, indeed many people lead others astray according to their desires, without any knowledge. Surely your Lord best knows those who exceed the limits, meaning those who transgress His boundaries. They are the polytheists who say, 'There is no difference between what you kill and what God kills, so you should either eat both or abstain from both.'"

The verse literally says: *And what have you* (mā lakum) *that you should not eat*, where *what have you* means "what benefit shall you have?" and the question is rhetorical, implying exclamation and surprise. It has also been said that *mā lakum* means "you do not have the right," where the particle *mā* implies negation [as opposed to meaning "what," implying a question].

This verse shows that forbidden foods were already revealed and outlined before this chapter (Sūrah al-Anʿām). The only other Meccan chapter which talks about them is Sūrah al-Naḥl [in 16:115], which means that Chapter 16 was revealed before Chapter 6.[1]

وَ ذَرُوا ظاهِرَ الْإِثْمِ وَ باطِنَهُ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْسِبُونَ الْإِثْمَ سَيُجْزَوْنَ بِما كانُوا يَقْتَرِفُونَ ﴿١٢٠﴾

(6:120) And abandon the outward sin **(ẓāhir al-ithm)** *and the inward* **(bāṭinahu)***; surely they who earn sin shall be recompensed with what they earned.*

The unconditional sense of this verse includes all sins, whether open or secret. However, given the context of the verse and in order to maintain its connection with the verses before and after, it should be interpreted as a preparation for the upcoming prohibition: *And do not eat of that on which Allah's name has not been mentioned, and that is most surely a transgression* (6:121). This means that "eating of that on which Allah's name has not been mentioned" [in verse 6:121] is an instance of "sin" [in the current verse]—so that it may connect to the previous preparation. Hence, it must be either an outward sin or an inward one. Given the strong and

1 This is contrary to the narrations about the order of revelation of the chapters. Moreover, a comparison between verses 16:118 and 6:146 suggests that Chapter 6 was revealed before Chapter 16. It could be that this verse (6:119) refers to verse 6:145 below. This means that the verses of the chapter were not arranged in the same order as they were revealed, which is possible. It might also help to note that according to some accounts, this chapter was revealed entirely at once. (Trans.)

repeated emphasis in *that is most surely a transgression* (6:121), we can infer that this must be an inward sin. Otherwise, it would not need such exaggerated emphasis.

Based on the above inference, "outward sin" means a violation which everyone knows to be evil and conducive to a miserable end. Some examples would be polytheism, oppression, and causing mischief in the world. Then "inward sin" would be what does not seem to be problematic at first sight, such as eating a dead animal, blood or pork. The way to learn about these sins is through God's teachings, although sometimes the human intellect can also discover them. This is what we can say about the meaning of the outward sin and the inwards given the context of the verse.

Exegetes have suggested other interpretations for the two classes of sin, such as:

Outward sins are those that are committed openly in public, while inward sins are those that are committed secretly in private.

Outward sin is what one does physically, while inward sin is what one does with the heart.

Outward sin refers to adultery, while inward sin refers to taking a lover.[1]

Outward sin is to marry one's stepmother, while inward sin is adultery.

Both sins refer to adultery, but it is called outward if the person speaks about it and makes it public, and it is called inward if the person does not disclose it to others. This is based on the impression of the Arabs in the pre-Islamic era, where they deemed that adultery is permissible as long it is covert. Their definition of *faḥshā'* (indecency, adultery) only included that which is announced to others.

As the reader would agree, none of these interpretations does justice to the theme and context of the verses. Moreover, there is no evidence for most of them, if not all.

… surely they who earn sin shall be recompensed with what they earned: This sentence justifies the previous prohibition by warning of a painful retribution.

وَ لا تَأْكُلُوا مِمَّا لَمْ يُذْكَرِ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَ إِنَّهُ لَفِسْقٌ وَ إِنَّ الشَّياطِينَ لَيُوحُونَ

1 This would be a casual love relationship without marriage, as mentioned in verses 4:25 and 5:5, such as having a boyfriend or girlfriend. (Trans.)

إِلَىٰ أَوْلِيَائِهِمْ لِيُجَادِلُوكُمْ ۖ وَإِنْ أَطَعْتُمُوهُمْ إِنَّكُمْ لَمُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٢١﴾

(6:121) And do not eat of that on which Allah's name has not been mentioned, and that is most surely a transgression; and most surely the devils suggest to their friends that they should contend with you; and if you obey them, you shall most surely be polytheists.

As we said above, this prohibition is a complement and counterpart of: *Therefore eat of that on which Allah's name has been mentioned* (6:118). The subsequent part of the verse—*and that is most surely a transgression*—explains and emphasizes the wisdom behind this prohibition. It first justifies the prohibition by saying: *and that is most surely a transgression*. The implied argument is: (a) eating such food is surely a transgression; (b) one should avoid all transgression; (c) therefore it is incumbent to avoid eating that on which God's name has not been mentioned.

… and most surely the devils suggest to their friends that they should contend with you…: This sentence pertains to and refutes the doubts that were raised by the polytheists against the believers. The "friends of devils" are the polytheists. The polytheists used to argue with the believers saying: "how come you eat what you kill yourselves, but you do not eat what God has killed?"—referring to dead animals. The verse is saying that this is a false idea that the devils have inspired and suggested to them. The difference between the two is that eating a dead animal is *fisq* (transgression, sin), unlike eating a legally slaughtered animal. God has forbidden the former, but not the latter. The list of what God has forbidden does not include that which has been slaughtered in God's name.

… and if you obey them, you shall most surely be polytheists: This sentence cautions and threatens the Muslims about the risk of falling outside *īmān* (belief, faith). It means: "If you obey the polytheists and eat dead animals as they enjoin you to, then you too will be polytheists like them. You will also be polytheists like them in the sense that you have adopted their custom, or in the sense that by obeying them, you become their friends and affiliates (*awliyāʾ*)." He says: *And whoever amongst you takes them for an ally, then surely he is one of them* (5:51).

This sentence—*and if you obey them…*—is mentioned after the "prohibition" of eating *that on which Allah's name has not been mentioned*, not after the "command" to eat of *that on which Allah's name has been mentioned*. This shows that what the polytheists wanted from the believers was

that they should continue eating dead meat, not that they should abstain from eating what has been slaughtered in God's name.

Examining Narrations

(1) When the Prophet conquered Mecca, he entered the Sacred Mosque with a staff in his hand, where every tribe had an idol there which they used to worship. The Prophet started passing by the idols one by one, hitting them on the chest and knocking them over. Whenever an idol was knocked over, the [Muslim] people would attack it with axes, break it, and throw it out of the Mosque. While doing this the Prophet would recite: *And the word of your Lord has been accomplished truly and justly; there is none who can change His words, and He is the Hearing, the Knowing* (6:115).[1]

(2) Concerning *and the word of your Lord has been accomplished truly and justly* (6:115) the Prophet said: [*The word of your Lord* means] *lā ilāh illā Allāh* (there is no god but God).[2]

(3) Imam al-Ṣādiq said: Indeed the Imam can hear while he is in his mother's belly. Then he is born while it is written between his shoulders: *And the word of your Lord has been accomplished truly and justly; there is none who can change His words, and He is the Hearing, the Knowing* (6:115). And once Imamate is transferred to him, God assigns a column of light to him through which he sees the actions of people in every land.[3]

Author's comment: This idea is also narrated through other Shia chains of transmission from Imam al-Ṣādiq. Al-Qummī and al-ʿAyyāshī have also narrated it from the Imam in their *tafsīr*s. Some of these narrations say that the verse is written "between his two eyes," and some of them say "on his right arm."

The writing of the verse refers to God's irrevocable decree that His rulings shall manifest through the Imam. The different places where the verse is written according to these narrations correspond to different

1 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of Ibn Mardawayh, on the authority of Abū al-Yamān ʿĀmir b. ʿAbd-Allāh.

2 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of Ibn Mardawayh and Ibn al-Najjār, on the authority of Anas b. Mālik.

3 *Al-Kāfī*, via its chain of narration, on the authority of Muḥammad b. Marwān.

aspects and senses of this decree: (1) It is written between his two eyes in the sense that the verse is placed in front of him and he follows its mandate. (2) It is written between his two shoulders in the sense that it is laid on his back [as a load to carry], and/or that he is supported and aided by it. (3) It is written on his right arm, meaning that the verse is inscribed on his actions, and that he is strengthened and aided by it.

The three narrations quoted above confirm our interpretation of the verse—that "the accomplishment of God's word" refers to the appearance of the message of Islam. What is mentioned in these narrations—such as the prophethood of Muḥammad, the revelation of the Qur'an, and Imamate—are the requirements and concomitants of this.

(4) Muḥammad b. Muslim says: Once I asked the Imam [al-Bāqir or al-Ṣādiq] about a person who slaughters an animal while saying either of the following: *lā ilāh illā Allāh* (there is no god but God), *subḥān Allāh* (glory be to God), *al-ḥamd lillāh* (praise be to God), or *Allāh akbar* (god is greater or the greatest). The Imam said, "All of these are God's names."[1]

(5) Ibn Sinān says: Once I asked Imam al-Ṣādiq about what is slaughtered by a woman or a child: "Is it permissible to eat from it?" He said, "Yes: if the woman is Muslim and mentions God's name, then her slaughter is lawful. If a child is capable of slaughtering and mentions God's name, then his slaughter is lawful. If a Muslim man forgets to name God, then it is permissible to eat from it as long as you are not suspicious[2] of him."[3]

Author's comment: There are also some narrations to this effect through Sunni chains of transmission.

(6) Concerning what is slaughtered by a Jew or an enemy of Ahl al-Bayt, Imam al-Ṣādiq said: Do not eat what he has slaughtered unless you hear him mention the name of God. Have you not heard the words of God: *And do not eat of that on which Allah's*

1 *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī.*

2 Apparently what is meant is that it is lawful as long you do not suspect that he has *intentionally* dropped mentioning the name of God. In other words, if he is committed to saying it but forgets to say it, then it is lawful. (Trans.)

3 *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī.*

name has not been mentioned (6:121)?[1]

(7) Ibn ʿAbbās said: *And do not eat of that on which Allah's name has not been mentioned, and that is most surely a transgression* (6:121): this has been abrogated by the following exception: *And the food of the People of the Book is lawful for you* (5:5).[2]

Author's comment: As we said under verse 5:5, if the verse implies any abrogation, then it would only abrogate the condition that the slaughterer must be a Muslim, not the condition that the slaughterer must mention the name of God. This is because the two verses do not disagree with regards to this condition. Besides, this is a jurisprudential issue [that goes beyond Qur'anic exegesis].

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1 *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, on the authority of Ḥumrān.

2 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of Abū Dāwūd, al-Bayhaqī's *al-Sunan* and Ibn Mardawayh. The idea of abrogation is also narrated [in *al-Durr al-manthūr*] on the authority of Ibn Abī Ḥātim, from Makḥūl.

Verses 122-127

أَ وَ مَنْ كانَ مَيْتاً فَأَحْيَيْناهُ وَ جَعَلْنا لَهُ نُوراً يَمْشِي بِهِ فِي النَّاسِ كَمَنْ مَثَلُهُ فِي
الظُّلُماتِ لَيْسَ بِخارِجٍ مِنْها كَذلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِلْكافِرِينَ ما كانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٢٢﴾ وَ كَذلِكَ
جَعَلْنا فِي كُلِّ قَرْيَةٍ أَكابِرَ مُجْرِمِيها لِيَمْكُرُوا فِيها وَ ما يَمْكُرُونَ إِلاَّ بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ
وَ ما يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٢٣﴾ وَ إِذا جاءَتْهُمْ آيَةٌ قالُوا لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ حَتَّى نُؤْتى مِثْلَ ما أُوتِيَ رُسُلُ
اللَّهِ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ حَيْثُ يَجْعَلُ رِسالَتَهُ سَيُصِيبُ الَّذِينَ أَجْرَمُوا صَغارٌ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَ
عَذابٌ شَدِيدٌ بِما كانُوا يَمْكُرُونَ ﴿١٢٤﴾ فَمَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَهْدِيَهُ يَشْرَحْ صَدْرَهُ
لِلْإِسْلامِ وَ مَنْ يُرِدْ أَنْ يُضِلَّهُ يَجْعَلْ صَدْرَهُ ضَيِّقاً حَرَجاً كَأَنَّما يَصَّعَّدُ فِي السَّماءِ
كَذلِكَ يَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ الرِّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ لا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٢٥﴾ وَ هذا صِراطُ رَبِّكَ مُسْتَقِيماً
قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْآياتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَذَّكَّرُونَ ﴿١٢٦﴾ لَهُمْ دارُ السَّلامِ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَ هُوَ وَلِيُّهُمْ بِما
كانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٢٧﴾

(6:122) *Is he who was dead then We raised him to life and placed for him a light by which he walks among the people, like him whose likeness is (that of one) in utter darkness whence he cannot come forth? Thus what they did was decorated for the disbelievers.*

(6:123) *And thus have We placed in every town its great sinners, that they may plot therein; and they do not plot but against their own souls, and they do not perceive.*

(6:124) *And when a communication comes to them they say: We will not believe till we are given the like of what Allah's messengers are given. Allah best knows where He places His message. There shall befall those who are guilty humiliation from Allah and severe chastisement because of what they plotted.*

(6:125) *Therefore (for) whomsoever it is Allah's will to guide, He expands his breast for Islam, and (for) whomsoever it is His will to lead astray, He makes his breast constricted, tight as though he were*

ascending upwards; thus does Allah lay uncleanness upon those who do not believe.

(6:126) *And this is the path of your Lord, a straight one; indeed We have made the communications clear for a people who mind.*

(6:127) *They shall have the abode of peace with their Lord, and He is their guardian because of what they used to do.*

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Commentary

أَ وَ مَنْ كانَ مَيْتاً فَأَحْيَيْناهُ وَ جَعَلْنا لَهُ نُوراً يَمْشِي بِهِ فِي النَّاسِ كَمَنْ مَثَلُهُ فِي الظُّلُماتِ لَيْسَ بِخارِجٍ مِنْها كَذلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِلْكافِرِينَ ما كانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٢٢﴾

(6:122) Is he who was dead then We raised him to life and placed* (jaʿalnā, from jaʿl) *for him a light by which he walks among the people, like him whose likeness is (that of one) in utter darkness whence he cannot come forth? Thus what they did was decorated for the disbelievers.

The meaning of this verse is clear. What primarily springs to the mind as the most straightforward message of this verse is that it provides an analogy for believers in contrast to disbelievers. Reflecting on the verse would clarify the condition of each group in terms of guidance and error.

Prior to being guided by God, the human being is like a dead body that is deprived of life, sense and motion. But once the person believes in his Lord—a belief that is approved by Him—then it is as if God has revived him after being dead, and has given him a light that is with him wherever he goes. Then the person can distinguish good from evil and benefit from harm in light of this light. Therefore, he can take what is beneficial for him and forsake what is harmful, and continue his life like this.

A disbeliever, on the other hand, is like someone who is trapped deep in darkness, without any escape. He is covered by the darkness of [spiritual] death, which gives rise to the darkness of ignorance with respect to distinguishing good from evil, and benefit from harm. In terms of meaning, this verse is in a sense similar to the following verses: *Only those accept who listen; but as for the dead, Allah will raise them* (6:36); *Whoever does good whether male or female and he is a believer, We will most certainly make him live a good life* (16:97).

Based on the above interpretation, the verse uses symbolic and metaphorical expressions, where "death" represents *ḍalāl* (error, misguidance,

being lost), "life" represents guidance or *īmān* (belief, faith), "light" represents the ability to discern good deeds, and "darkness" represents ignorance. These ideas address a misconception that is common among the majority of people, who view the human being as limited to the body. The only life that they consider for humankind is animalistic life, which consists of feeling physical pleasures, having voluntary movements, and so on. That is why they view believers and disbelievers at the same level, because they are equally endowed with physical life. Hence, the verse depicts an imaginary picture and employs a metaphorical expression to illustrate what it really means: it describes believers as living—because faith is life—and having a light to walk among the people; and describes the disbelievers as dead—because error is death—and plunged in such darkness that they have no way out of it.

However, if we contemplate the different aspects of this verse further, especially in light of what the Noble Qur'an says elsewhere, then we can reach a meaning that is beyond what the lay mind can reach. In His Book God describes those who are connected to their Lord as *eternal* beings whose lives do not end with their physical death. Rather, they are kept and preserved afterwards under God's protection and guardianship, where they are untouched by exhaustion and weariness, exempt from misery and pain, immersed in the love of their Lord, and happy with the pleasure of divine proximity. They see nothing but good and face nothing but happiness. They are in peace and security, without any fear or danger, but invested with unending bliss, joy and pleasure.

Such individuals see what other people do not see, hear what others do not hear, understand what others do not understand, and strive for what others do not care about. Perhaps their apparent activities and interactions are no different from what others do, but their underlying cognition and will rise far above the cognition and will of others. This shows that they have a share of "life" that other people lack, for life is the source of cognition and will. Hence, believers have a level of life that others do not have.

This is similar to the case of all human beings compared to animals: they equally have certain cognitions and volitions, such as realizing the basic necessities of life and having voluntary movements. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the human being is a more advanced species and has a higher form of life compared to other animals. We see the works of humans which are a result of their power of reason and their

understanding of universals—things that are not found in other animals. We would have a similar judgment if we compared animals with plants, and plants with more primitive forms of existence. They are at different levels of life compared to one another.

Following the same thread, we can say that some humans have a higher share of life and light than others because they are invested with certain cognitions and volitions that cannot result from an ordinary stage of human life. They are the ones who are given [divine] knowledge and faith, have been grounded with certitude [about eternal facts], have totally engaged themselves with their Lord, and have let go of everyone and everything else. They discern what others cannot discern, and aim for what is beyond the ambition and capacity of others.

God says: *We will most certainly make him live a good life* (16:97). This verse does not talk about life in an absolute sense, which would include any life whatsoever. Instead, it says *good life*, which means a life that is good in its nature and essence. He also says: *They have hearts with which they do not understand, and they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear; they are as cattle, nay, they are in worse errors; these are the heedless ones* (7:179). This verse confirms that they [the heedless disbelievers] have hearts, eyes and ears just like the believers, but it negates the full effect and fruit of these faculties as they are found in the believers. God goes even further than this, asserting that the believers have a special spirit (*rūḥ*) that is exclusive to them: *These are they into whose hearts He has impressed faith, and whom He has strengthened with a spirit from Him* (58:22).

Given the above, the special "life" and "light" of the believers is not something merely metaphorical and figurative. Rather, both of them are meant in the most real and literal sense. True believers are exclusively possessed of a reality that is more befitting to be called "life" than the life that is found in ordinary people, just as it is when we compare humans and animals in their shares of life, or when we compare animals and plants for that matter.

Is he who was dead…: "Death" here can have two meanings: (1) being in error and devoid of divine guidance; or (2) *kufr* (lack of belief). Therefore this expression can refer to either of two meanings: (1) one is devoid of divine guidance in and of oneself [unless the person receives guidance from God]; or (2) one is in a state of disbelief before the person believes in God.

… then We raised him to life…: "Life" here means either *īmān* (belief,

faith) or guidance, which are effectively the same.

… and placed for him a light…: "Light" here means knowledge that results from one's *īmān*. Both Shias and Sunnis have narrated from the Prophet: "Whoever practices what he knows, God will provide him—or teach him—what he does not know." The reason for this is that once the spirit and reality of *īmān* is firmly established in one's soul, the person's opinions and actions will be shaped according to it, in a way that does not contravene the person's inner realization. Similarly, if any quality becomes deeply rooted in one's soul—whether that is a virtue or a vice—it will transform the person's opinions and actions in a way that will reflect that inner realization.

Some exegetes have said that "light" here means *īmān* (belief, faith). Others have said that it means the Qur'an. However, both interpretations are unlikely given the context and theme of the verse.

…by which he walks among the people…: This is the result of the above-mentioned light. It means that the person will have a sense of discernment in the darkness of social life, whereby he can pursue actions that will help him achieve true happiness in life, and abstain from what is harmful. Up to this point is a description of believers in terms of their life and light.

… like him whose likeness* (mathaluhu) *is…: *Mathal* here means *waṣf* (description, attribute).

… (that of one) in utter darkness…: This refers to the utter darkness of error, where there is no light of *īmān*.

… whence he cannot come forth…: Obviously death does not lead to the same results as life. Therefore, one's disbelief will not lead him to doing actions that would help him in the hereafter and make him achieve eternal happiness.

The above interpretation shows that there is an implied omitted subject in *like him whose likeness is (that of one) in utter darkness*. The implied meaning is: "like him whose likeness *is that he* is in utter darkness," where the pronoun "he" (*huwa*) is omitted. Some exegetes have said that the implied meaning is: "like him whose likeness *is the likeness of one who* is in utter darkness," where the omitted part is "the likeness of one who" (*mathal man*). There is no problem with their interpretation, except that it necessitates a longer omission in the verse.[1]

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1 In the English translation, the implied omission is the part in brackets—*that of one*—which corresponds to the second interpretation. (Trans.)

… Thus *(kadhālika) what they did was decorated for the disbelievers:* The word "thus" (*kadhālika*) indicates analogy and comparison. Given the context and flow of the first part of the verse, what is meant here is to compare a specific application to a general principle. A similar dichotomy is found in the verse: *thus does Allah compare truth and falsehood…thus does Allah set forth parables* (13:17), which means: "Take Our analogy as a basic principle, and interpret other analogies according to that." What is meant in the current verse is: "The actions of disbelievers have been decorated for them, and this is according to the above analogy about the disbelievers being in utter darkness and not having any way out of it." Indeed, their actions are so embellished in their eyes that they are completely absorbed and enchained in them, not letting them to ever go forth into the vastness of true felicity and light. God does not guide the unjust people.

Some exegetes have said: "Thus" here compares the disbelievers with the believers, saying that "each group does what it does because the actions of each group are decorated in their eyes." However, this interpretation does not comply with the theme and context of the first part of the verse.

وَ كَذلِكَ جَعَلْنا فِي كُلِّ قَرْيَةٍ أَكابِرَ مُجْرِمِيها لِيَمْكُرُوا فِيها وَ ما يَمْكُرُونَ إِلاَّ بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ وَ ما يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٢٣﴾

(6:123) And thus have We placed* (jaʿalnā, from jaʿl) *in every town its great sinners, that they may plot therein; and they do not plot but against their own souls, and they do not perceive.

The message of the last verse was: "We have revived a certain group and given them a light to illuminate their way among the people, and there are others whom We have not revived and thus they remain in utter darkness. They have no way out, and their actions—which have been embellished in their eyes—cannot free them." Then this verse continues by saying: "It is thus that We have placed major sinners in every town so that they may plot against their religion, their prophet and the believers. However, their plots do not avail them. Hence they remain in utter darkness, unable to see. They only plot against themselves although they do not realize this."

Therefore, we can say that this verse and the last part of the previous verse complement each other. *Thus what they did was decorated for the disbelievers* (6:122) means that their actions that are decorated for them do

not help them and cannot bring them out of the darkness that they are in. *And thus have We placed in every town…* means that their actions and plots do not harm anyone other than themselves. Their plots are against themselves, but they do not perceive this because they are covered in darkness.

Here is another interpretation suggested by one exegete:

> The word "thus" (*kadhālika*) [in this verse and at the end of the last verse] makes a comparison between disbelievers and believers. It says that what the disbelievers do is decorated for them in a similar way [as the believers are given life and light]. Also, We have appointed great sinners in every town in a like manner: We have appointed plotters among wrongdoers just as We have appointed illuminated believers. In other words, We treated both groups equally, except that the believers followed the way of guidance by their right choice, while the sinners erred because of their wrong choice.
>
> What supports this interpretation is that both verses use the verb *jaʿl* (to place, to make, to appoint), which is meant in the same sense in the both verses. It means "to transform, to make someone become something, or to turn someone into a certain condition." The difference is that the first case [about the believers] indicates a merciful making, while the second case [about the sinners] means making them capable of plotting evil.

This interpretation, however, does not comply well with the overall context and theme of the verses.

The verb *jaʿl* (to place) in *We have placed in every town its great sinners* (6:123) is meant in the same sense as in *and We placed for him a light* (6:122). Therefore, it can best be interpreted as *khalq* (to create, to make). The meaning is: "We created great sinners in every town so that they may plot there." This means that their plotting is the goal and objective of their creation, which is similar to their entrance in the Fire as God's purpose in their creation: *And certainly We have created for hell many of the jinn and humankind* (7:179). We have already discussed what this means in several places in this work.[1]

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1 In short, their evildoing and their consequent damnation are not primary objectives that God has willed in and of themselves (*bi-al-dhāt*), but they are inevitable consequences of the creation of humankind as it is. They are willed and desired accidentally (*bi-al-ʿaraḍ*) because they are part of a whole which is good overall. (Trans.)

The verse specifically talks about their "great sinners" because what is meant is to ascribe the plot to its primary perpetrators. Indeed, it is only the great sinners who take initiative to plot against God and His communications. The "lesser sinners"—which would be the general public—are, rather, followers of the first group.

… and they do not plot* (yamkurūna, from makr) *but against their own souls, and they do not perceive: The reason for this is that *makr* (to plot, to scheme, to devise) [in its evil sense] means doing something that involves a hidden evil or loss for the other side, such that he would not achieve his goal, his efforts would be fruitless, and his actions would be ineffective. However, God has no personal interest in His religion. His call to religion does not benefit Him, but it benefits those who are called to it. Hence, if one plots against God and His communications—in order to ruin the purpose of the call and prevent the efforts that are made for it from succeeding—then he is in reality harming himself, not his Lord. Such a person is plotting against himself in a way that he does not realize.

وَ إِذا جاءَتْهُمْ آيَةٌ قالُوا لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ حَتَّى نُؤْتى مِثْلَ ما أُوتِيَ رُسُلُ اللَّهِ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ حَيْثُ يَجْعَلُ رِسالَتَهُ سَيُصِيبُ الَّذِينَ أَجْرَمُوا صَغارٌ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَ عَذابٌ شَدِيدٌ بِما كانُوا يَمْكُرُونَ ﴿١٢٤﴾

(6:124) And when a communication comes to them they say: We will not believe till we are given the like of what Allah's messengers* (rusul, from risālah) *are given. Allah best knows where He places His message. There shall befall those who are guilty humiliation* (ṣaghār) *from Allah and severe chastisement because of what they plotted.

Ṣaghār means "humiliation, abasement, disgrace." What they meant by *We will not believe till we are given the like of what Allah's messengers are given* is that they should be given the position of *risālah* (mission, messengership, message) including its aspect of religious call (*daʿwah*). They did not merely request to receive religious teachings—including the fundamental beliefs and the practical branches—because otherwise they would have said "prophets" (*anbiyāʾ*) instead of "messengers" (*rusul*) or something similar.[1] This second meaning is seen in other verses like: *Why*

1 This is based on the distinction that a *nabī* (prophet) is one who receives revelation about religious teachings, while a *rasūl* (messenger) is one who

does not Allah speak to us or a sign come to us? (2:118); *Why have not angels been sent down upon us, or (why) do we not see our Lord?* (25:21).

Given the above, what they meant was: "We will not believe unless we are given the same mission that was given to the messengers." This involves a sense of mockery because they did not believe in messengership.[1] Therefore, their statement is similar to another statement that is narrated from them elsewhere: *If only this Qur'an were revealed to an important man from the two tribes* (43:31). Likewise, God's answer to them here—*Allah best knows where He places His message*—is similar to His answer to them there: *Is it they who distribute the mercy of your Lord?* (43:32).

It should now be clear that the pronouns "them" and "they" in *And when a communication comes to them they say* refer to "great sinners" in the last verse (6:123). It cannot refer to all polytheists because of the following reasons: (1) It does not make sense for all people to say: *Till we are given the like of what Allah's messengers are given*. One cannot expect that all people should be appointed as messengers because then there will be no one to be sent to! (2) The answer given here—*Allah best knows where He places His message*—does not match the request for all people to be appointed as messengers. If that were the intended meaning, then the response should have been: "What you are asking is vain and meaningless." (3) The subsequent part of the verse threatens them by saying: *There shall befall those who are guilty humiliation from Allah and severe chastisement because of what they plotted*. This sentence describes them as "guilty" and justifies the threat by referring to their "plots." This corresponds to the "great sinners" in the last verse, because only they were described as "plotters."

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is also charged with a social duty of propagation. This is primarily a lexical distinction, because *nabī* literally means "one who is informed" while *rasūl* means "one who is sent." This definition, however, contravenes the use of the verb "send" for both *nabī* and *rasūl* in verse 22:52. The author favors another distinction between the two terms under that verse, deduced from the narrations. See volume 28 of the English translation, pp. 229ff. Also see the author's discussion under verse 2:213; volume 3 (1st ed.) of the English translation, pp. 187ff. (Trans.)

1 That is, they did not believe that there could be human messengers sent from God. (Trans.)

فَمَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَهْدِيَهُ يَشْرَحْ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلامِ وَ مَنْ يُرِدْ أَنْ يُضِلَّهُ يَجْعَلْ صَدْرَهُ ضَيِّقاً حَرَجاً كَأَنَّما يَصَّعَّدُ فِي السَّماءِ كَذلِكَ يَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ الرِّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ لا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٢٥﴾

(6:125) Therefore (for) whomsoever it is Allah's will to guide, He expands* (yashraḥ, from sharḥ) *his breast* (ṣadrahu) *for Islam, and (for) whomsoever it is His will to lead astray, He makes his breast constricted, tight as though he were ascending upwards; thus does Allah lay uncleanness upon those who do not believe.

Sharḥ is synonymous with *basṭ* (to expand, to open, to unfold). According to *al-Mufradāt* by al-Rāghib, it was originally used for cutting a piece of meat open and other similar uses. *Ṣadr* (breast, chest) in these contexts refers to the receptacle of knowledge and intuition. "Expansion of breast" (*sharḥ al-ṣadr*) refers to a condition where the person can absorb correct teachings and does not reject the word of truth when confronted with it. The same idea can be inferred from the next part of the verse, which talks about those who stray: *He makes his breast constricted, tight*.

"Islam" here means submission (*taslīm*) to God. Hence, if God expands one's breast for Islam, it means that He has unfolded and extended it to accept what comes to him from God, including the beliefs and practices of religion. As a result, he will absorb and retain any true speech that is cast upon him, and will adopt any righteous act that he comes to know. This is because of having an inner light and perception that illuminates every true belief and righteous deed. On the contrary, if the eye of one's heart is blinded, then he cannot distinguish right from wrong, nor truth from falsehood. The Qur'an says: *For surely it is not the eyes that are blind, but blind are the hearts which are in the breasts* (22:46).

God has explained this sense of "expansion of breast" in the verse: *What! Is he whose breast Allah has expanded for Islam so that he is on* (ʿalá) *a light from his Lord (like the hard-hearted)? Nay, woe to those whose hearts are hard against the remembrance of Allah* (39:22). The preposition "on" (*ʿalá*) suggests that the person is "mounted" on a light from God which illuminates his path. Since the next part of the verse contrasts this with one who is hard-hearted and rejects God's remembrance, it shows that the first person [whose breast has been expanded for Islam] has a soft heart which accepts the remembrance of God. Then the next verse says: *Allah*

has revealed the best announcement, a book conformable in its various parts, repeating, whereat do shudder the skins of those who fear their Lord, then their skins and their hearts are softened to the remembrance of Allah; this is Allah's guidance, He guides with it whom He wills; and (as for) him whom Allah makes err, there is no guide for him (39:23). This verse refers to the softening of the heart toward the remembrance of God and its obedience before the truth. It then says that this is what is meant by divine guidance, by which God guides whomever He wills.

Hence the verses in Sūrah al-Zumar (39:22-23) and the current verse of discussion reduce to the same meaning which describes the process through which God guides His servants. When He wills to guide a servant, He expands the person's breast in a way that it will embrace every true belief and righteous act; it accepts these instructions due to softness, as opposed to rejecting them because of hardness. This is a kind of spiritual light that illuminates true speech and righteous acts, thereby helping the person to adopt what he discerns in this light. This is a definition of divine guidance.

Based on the above explanation, this verse—*Therefore (for) whomsoever it is Allah's will to guide, He expands his breast for Islam*—is an alternative expression for what we read above: *Is he who was dead then We raised him to life and placed for him a light by which he walks among the people* (6:122). These two verses are two sides of the same coin and convey the same reality, such that if one is true then the other is also true. That is why the current verse)—*Therefore (for) whomsoever it is Allah's will*—starts by "therefore" (the letter *fā*ʾ) which indicates consequence and conclusion (*tafrī*ʿ). It is as if one verse logically follows the other, which is a way of showing the mutual and interdependent truth of both. This is an elegant and subtle way of expression [to use consequence as a sign of equivalence].

The two verses connect as follows: "God revives some people after being dead and gives them a light that illuminates their required beliefs and actions. Thus they adopt these beliefs and actions. Given this [that is, given what was said in verse 6:122], it therefore follows that whenever God wants to guide someone, He expands the person's breast such that he submits to his Lord and does not turn away from His worship." This means that submission (*islām*) is a light from God, and those who submit to their Lord are riding on a light from their Lord.

… and (for) whomsoever it is His will to lead astray **(yuḍlilhu, from**

iḍlāl), ***He makes his breast constricted*** **(ḍayyiqan),** ***tight*** **(ḥarajan)** ***as though he were ascending upwards; thus does Allah lay uncleanness upon those who do not believe*****:** *Iḍlāl* (to misguide, to lead astray) is the opposite of *hidāyah* (to guide). That is why it results in the constriction of the breast, as opposed to guidance which leads to the expansion and opening of the breast. As a result, the constricted breast will refuse to accept (*taḥarraja*) the truths that it faces because it does not have the capacity to let it in. The attribute *ḥaraj* (tight, narrow) indicates this *taḥarruj* (avoidance, refusal to accept). According to *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, *ḥaraj* means "the tightest of the tight."

Al-Mufradāt says,

> The root meaning of *ḥaraj* and *ḥarāj* is the "accumulation and concentration of something." Since this involves a tight space between the concentrated parts, *ḥaraj* is used for *ḍīq* (tightness, narrowness, constriction). It is also used for sin.

Given the above definitions, *and tight as though he were ascending upwards* is an interpretation of "constricted." It clarifies that this constriction is somewhat similar to the tightness of containers and vessels, in the sense that one cannot put something bigger than them in them.

… thus does Allah lay uncleanness **(al-rijs)** ***upon*** **(ʿalá)** ***those who do not believe*****:** This sentence gives us a general rule about those whom God leads astray. He leads them astray because they do not believe, meaning that they lack submission to God and are not obedient before the truth. *Rijs* is synonymous with *qadhar* (defilement, impurity, filth,) and is used here as a replacement for *ḍalāl* (being astray, misguidance, error). Otherwise, the first part of the verse speaks about guidance, which is associated with belief. Thus, the last part about lack of belief would be associated with misguidance.[1] The preposition *ʿalá* (upon, on, over)—in *upon* (ʿalá) *those who do not believe*—suggests a sense of coming from *above*. It is as if this defilement is something that towers above them and overshadows them, then it comes and separates between them and others. As a result, others will naturally turn away from them as they turn away from a food that has been stained with uncleanness.

These verses are primarily concerned with not believing in God in the sense of *shirk* (polytheism, associating partners with God). However,

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1 The word "thus" in *thus does Allah lay uncleanness* also shows that *rijs* is used as an equivalent of *ḍalāl*. (Trans.)

this verse ends with: *those who do not believe* in an absolute sense, without specifying the object of their disbelief.[1] This suggests a more comprehensive meaning that includes both not believing in God (that is, *shirk*) and not believing in the revealed verses and communications of God, which means rejecting the beliefs and practices that He has revealed. This inclusive meaning can be deduced from the following expressions in the current verse: *He expands his breast for Islam…* (6:125); *and placed for him a light by which he walks…* (6:122); *He makes his breast constricted, tight…* (6:125), and from the following expression from before: *in utter darkness whence he cannot come forth* (6:122).[2]

One exegete has used this verse to argue that guidance and error are solely from God, without involving any other factor. This is not correct, because as the reader would agree, the point of the verse is to define and describe the nature of God's guidance and misguidance. The theme of the verse is not to attribute guidance and misguidance exclusively to Him, and to negate the involvement of anything or anyone else. This should be clear.

Similarly, another exegete has said that the very text of the verse conveys two things: (1) it says that guidance and misguidance are from God; and (2) it provides a definite rational proof for this. This proof can be explained as follows:

> A person is equally capable of both believing and disbelieving. Hence, he will not do either unless there is a determining cause that makes him choose one over the other. That would be an inner motive which is knowing, believing or speculating that the benefits and interests involved in the act outweigh its harms and losses. It has already been proven that such incentives come to one's heart only from God. These incentives, coupled with the power to act, will necessitate the occurrence of that act.
>
> Given the above, it thus follows that it is impossible for a servant to believe unless God creates an impression in his heart that believing is preferable [to not believing]. As a result, the person's heart will incline to belief and his soul will open up to it. This is

1 That is, it does not specify "what" they do not believe in. (Trans.)

2 In other words, these expressions show that *those who do not believe* (6:125) has a comprehensive meaning which includes lack of belief in God and in the beliefs and practices of His religion. (Trans.)

called the "expansion of the breast" (*sharḥ al-ṣadr*). Similarly, it is impossible for one to disbelieve unless the opposite impression is created in his heart, which leads to his aversion and disgust toward belief. This is what is meant by making the heart constricted and tight.

Therefore the implied meaning of the verse is: "Whomsoever God wills to guide, He will strengthen the motives of belief in him; and whomsoever He wills to lead astray, He will strengthen the impediments of belief and the motives of disbelief in him." Since we can deduce this rationally from the verse, it means that these rational arguments are found in the explicit text of the Qur'an.

There are a few problems with the above view:

(1) If we attribute an event to God as the One Who creates the required means and background for its existence, it does not mean that the event cannot be attributed to any other factor as well. Such exclusivity means negating the universal law of causality. If this law does not hold, then we cannot deduce anything rationally to begin with.[1] Therefore, it is possible to attribute guidance and misguidance to other factors—by a real attribution—while we also attribute them to God. Such a dual attribution does not necessitate a contradiction.

(2) The verse identifies the expansion and contraction of the breasts as acts of God, but these two are obviously not the same as the inclination and disinclination the souls. Therefore, strictly speaking, the above interpretation is irrelevant to what is said in the verse. It is true that there is some concomitance and implication between these two: if a servant chooses an action, it means that he is inclined to it, and if he refrains from an action, it means that he is disinclined to it. However, this does not mean that the expansion and contraction of the heart are the same as inclination and disinclination toward an act. This is a form of fallacy where one mistakes one event for another event that coincides with it. Another baffling point is that since his supposedly sound argument coincides with the verse, it proves that the text of the Qur'an makes explicit reference to these arguments.

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1 This is based on the idea that there is a causal relationship between the premises and the conclusion in a rational argument. To be more accurate, however, logical relation is similar to, but not the same as, causal relation. This pertains to the difference between "reason" and "cause." (Trans.)

(3) It should be clear to the reader by now that the verse is meant to define God's guidance and misguidance *if and whenever* He wills to guide or misguide someone. It does not say anything about guidance and misguidance being *only* from God and not from anyone else. There is nothing in the text of the verse to indicate this idea even though it is a true statement in and of itself.

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وَ هذا صِراطُ رَبِّكَ مُسْتَقِيماً قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْآياتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَذَّكَّرُونَ ﴿١٢٦﴾

(6:126) ***And this* (hādhā) *is the path of your Lord, a straight one; indeed We have made the communications clear for a people who mind.***

The demonstrative pronoun "this" refers to God's custom of guidance and misguidance in the previous verse. We have already discussed the meanings of "path" (*ṣirāṭ*) and its straightness.[1] Here God clarifies that what was said above—that He expands one's breast for Islam when He wants to guide a servant, and contracts one's breast tightly when He wants to lead one astray—is His "straight path," meaning a custom that He follows without any change or elimination. Hence, every believer's breast has been expanded for submission (*islām*) to God, while every disbeliever is the opposite.

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***And this is the path of your Lord, a straight one…*:** Given the above explanation, this sentence continues the description in the last verse by emphasizing that what was said above is a decisive definition of guidance and misguidance which is both inclusive and exclusive.[2] This is then further emphasized by saying: *indeed We have made the communications clear for a people who mind*. That is: "What is said here is true and clear for those who take heed and look within themselves at what God has placed in their souls as intrinsic truths and innate beliefs. By remembering these inborn assets one can find his way to learning every truth and distinguishing it from falsehood. Not to mention that the above description has come from God; after all, He is the One Who guides humankind both to the argument and to the conclusion that results from it."

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1 See the author's discussion under verse 1:6; volume 1 of the English translation. (Trans.)

2 An inclusive (*jāmiʿ*) definition is one that encompasses all applications of the term. An exclusive (*māniʿ*) definition is one that excludes other instances and applications that do not fall under the term. (Trans.)

لَهُمْ دارُ السَّلامِ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَ هُوَ وَلِيُّهُمْ بِما كانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٢٧﴾

(6:127) ***They shall have the abode of peace* (dār al-salām) *with their Lord, and He is their guardian because of what they used to do.***

Given the context of the verse, *salām* here means "being immune and free from outward and inward defects," which is the lexical meaning of the term. "The abode of peace" (*dār al-salām*) means a place where people are not threatened by any defect, evil or loss, such as death, decay, disease, poverty, sorrow, anxiety and bereavement. That would be the promised paradise, especially given the qualification *with their Lord*.

As with God's *awliyāʾ* (friends, saints), even in this world they find themselves in the abode of peace which God has promised them. This is because they see God—and not themselves—as the sole possessor of everything. Therefore, they have nothing to fear losing [in the future] and do not grieve over any loss [in the past]. God says: *Lo! Surely the friends of Allah—they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve* (10:62). Despite they are in this world they are *with their Lord* because they have no other engagement but Him. They pass their life while being only with their Lord, in a state of [inner] seclusion and solitude.

***… and He is their guardian because of what they used to do*:** This refers to their journey in this life by the light of divine guidance which God has placed in their hearts and by which He has illuminated their sight and insight.

Some exegetes have suggested that *al-salām* is meant as one of the names of God. Then *dār al-salām* would mean God's abode, which would be paradise. However, the theme and context of the verses do not support this view.

It is said that the plural pronouns and verb conjugations in the verse refer to "people" (*qawm*) in *for a people who mind* (6:126) because that is the closest plural group that was mentioned before. However, if we contemplate on the verses, it becomes clear that the pronouns in this verse refer to those whom God wills to guide [mentioned in verse 6:125]. This is because they are the main subject of these verses, which serve to explain. God's blessings upon them. Therefore, the good promise given here would refer to them. Even the group in this verse—*a people who mind* (6:126)—is mentioned in light of that and in order to explain the above point.

Discussion on the Meaning of Divine Guidance

Despite its different forms and applications, "guidance" (*hidāyah*) is a matter of action and a description of what someone does. For example, when you give someone directions and show him the way, you would say, "I guided him to that place." This is one sense of guidance which is "showing the way" (*irāʾat al-ṭarīq*). You may also take the person's hand and walk him to his desired destination. This is another sense of guidance which is "taking one to the goal" (*al-īṣāl ilá al-maṭlūb*).

In both cases, your "guidance" is an *action* that you do: you either show the way or walk with the person. "Guidance" is a title that describes one's deliberate action with some purpose. Likewise, the word *ihtidāʾ* (being guided, being directed) indicates the *action* of one who receives guidance and follows the directions. Therefore, when we talk about God's guidance and call Him "the Guide" (*al-Hādī*), we are referring to one of His attributes of action (*ṣifāt al-fiʿl*): it is deduced and derived from His action and how He deals with His creatures, much like His other attributes of actions such as mercy (*raḥmah*) and sustenance (*rizq*).

God has two types of guidance:

(1) Existential, creational or cosmic guidance (*al-hidāyat al-takwīniyyah*), which pertains to God's creation of things. It is the same as the growing, maturing and transformation of things. God directs every species toward the actions that have been ordained for it and the perfection for which it has been created. Similarly, He guides every member of a species toward the affairs that have been decreed for it and the end which has been set for its existence. The Qur'an says: *He Who gave to every thing its creation, then guided it (to its goal)* (20:50); *Who created and shaped, and Who measured and guided* (87:2-3).

(2) Legislative guidance (*al-hidāyat al-tashrīʿiyyah*), which pertains to God's legislations and commandments. It includes the true beliefs and righteous deeds that He has legislated, as well as His subsequent commands, prohibitions, incentives, disincentives, promises of reward for those who comply, and threats of punishment for those who neglect.

God's legislative guidance has two forms and applications: (a) showing the way, as in the verse: *Surely We have shown him [mankind] the way: he may be thankful or unthankful* (76:3); and (b) taking one to the goal, as in the verse: *And if We had willed, We would certainly have raised him thereby; but he clung to the earth and followed his low desire* (7:176). The

Qur'an defines this second form of divine legislative guidance in the verse: *Therefore (for) whomsoever it is Allah's will to guide, He expands his breast for Islam…* (6:125). This means a special expansion of the heart whereby it embraces true beliefs and righteous deeds openly, without feeling constricted by them. It is a special spiritual readiness that makes one submit to God's commands and not reject them due to finding them burdensome.

The same sense of guidance is meant where He says: *What! Is he whose breast Allah has expanded for Islam so that he is on a light from his Lord (like the hard-hearted)?... This is Allah's guidance, He guides with it whom He wills* (39:22-23). Here God refers to this guidance as "light" because it illuminates to the heart what it should accept (that is, true beliefs and good deeds) and what it should not accept (that is, false beliefs and evil deeds).

God has also described this form of guidance in another way: after discussing how He has guided His holy prophets and has blessed them with great bounties, He says: *And We chose them and guided them to a straight path. This is Allah's guidance, He guides thereby whom He wills of His servants* (6:87-88). These verses show, as we said discussed them above, that one of the special characteristics of divine guidance is that it leads the guided individuals to a straight path and a level way that involves no internal contradiction [between its parts] or external failure [in leading to its goal].

This path is nothing but God's religion, including its [theoretical] teachings and [practical] rulings. It involves no contradiction in the sense that the different parts and aspects of it do not oppose one another, for they all represent pure monotheism which is a single unchanging reality. Moreover, they are all based on the divine innate nature of humankind which is an unchanging reality with consistent properties and implications.

There is also no conflict between the travelers on this path in the sense that what one prophet propagates is the same as what the rest of them propagate, and the call of the last prophet is the same as the call of the first prophet (Adam). The only difference between them is that of concision and elaboration [of the same religion of monotheism and submission].

Examining Narrations

(1) Concerning verse 6:122 Imam al-Bāqir said: *Is he who was dead then We raised him to life and placed for him a light by which he walks among the people*: Dead here means one who does not

knowing anything [of religion]. *And placed for him a light by which he walks among the people*: This [light] means an Imam that one follows. *Like him whose likeness is (that of one) in utter darkness*: This is one who does not know the Imam.[1]

Author's comment: This is an application of the verse (called *jary*). Otherwise, given the theme and context of the verse, the only plausible interpretation of the verse is that "life" means *īmān* (belief, faith), and "light" means God's guidance to true beliefs and righteous deeds.

(2) Zayd b. Aslam said: This verse [6:122] was revealed about ᶜAmmār b. Yāsir.[2]

(3) It is also narrated from Ibn ᶜAbbās and Zayd b. Aslam: It was revealed about ᶜUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb versus Abū Jahl b. Hishām.[3]

Author's comment: The context of the verse suggests that the verse is not about particular individuals.

(4) When God revealed the verse, *Therefore (for) whomsoever it is Allah's will to guide, He expands his breast for Islam* (6:125) the Messenger of God said: "When God places this light in one's heart, it expands and widens."

The Companions asked him, "Is there a sign to recognize this [expansion]?"

He replied, "Turning to the abode of eternity, distancing [oneself] from the abode of deceit, and preparing for death before its arrival."[4]

(5) Once Imam al-Riḍā was asked about the verse, *Therefore (for) whomsoever it is Allah's will to guide, He expands his breast for Islam* (6:125). He said: *Therefore, whomever it is Allah's will to guide*—toward His paradise and His abode of honor because of

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1 *Al-Kāfī*, via its chain of narration, on the authority of Zayd.

2 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*.

3 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*.

4 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of Ibn Abī Shaybah, Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, Ibn Jarīr, Abū al-Shaykh, Ibn Mardawayh, al-Ḥākim and al-Bayhaqī's *al-Shuᶜab*, through several chains of transmission, on the authority of Ibn Masᶜūd. This is also narrated from the Prophet by several exegetes on the authority of many of the Followers (*tābiᶜīn*) such as Abū Jaᶜfar al-Madāᵓinī, al-Faḍl, al-Ḥasan and ᶜAbd-Allāh b. al-Sūr.

his belief in this world[1]—*He expands his breast for* submission (*taslīm*) to God, reliance on Him, and assurance in the reward that He has promised him, such that he feels secure about it. *And whomever it is His will to lead astray*—from His paradise and His abode of honor in the hereafter, due to his disbelief and disobedience in this world—*He makes his breast constricted, tight*, to the point that he doubts [the truth] in his state of disbelief[2] and feels agitated in his belief, such that it is *as though he were ascending upwards; thus does Allah lay uncleanness upon those who do not believe*.[3]

Author's comment: This hadith involves some excellent points which confirm what we said in the exposition of the verse.

(6) Imam al-Ṣādiq said: "When God wills good for a servant, He places a spot of light in his heart, opens the ears of his heart, and assigns an angel to strengthen him. But when He wills evil for a servant, He places a black spot in his heart, closes the ears of his heart, and assigns a devil to mislead him." The Imam then recited this verse: *Therefore (for) whomsoever it is Allah's will to guide, He expands his breast for Islam, and (for) whomsoever it is His will to lead astray, He makes his breast constricted, tight as though he were ascending upwards* (6:125).[4]

(7) Imam al-Ṣādiq said: "Indeed the heart ever trembles in the chest, seeking the truth. Then when it comes to it, it finds peace." The Imam then recited: *Therefore (for) whomsoever it is Allah's will to guide, He expands his breast for Islam, and (for) whomsoever it*

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1 That is, "because of being a believer in God and His religion during his life in this world." (Trans.)

2 In another version it says *īmān* (belief, faith) instead of *kufr* (disbelief). (Auth.) The meaning would be: "…to the point that he starts doubting his faith." (Trans.)

3 *Al-ʿUyūn*, via its chain of narration, on the authority of Ḥamdān b. Sulaymān al-Naysābūrī.

4 *Al-Kāfī*, via its chain of narration, on the authority of Sulaymān b. Khālid. This hadith has also been narrated from the Imam by al-ʿAyyāshī in his *Tafsīr*, with an incomplete chain of transmission (*mursal*), and by al-Ṣadūq in *al-Tawḥīd*, with a complete chain of transmission (*musnad*).

is His will to lead astray, He makes his breast constricted, tight as though he were ascending upwards (6:125).[1]

(8) Khaythamah says: I heard Imam al-Bāqir saying: "As long as the heart has not found the truth, it ever throbs between its position and the throat [in agitation]. Once it reaches the truth, it rests." He then joined his fingers and recited the verse: *Therefore (for) whomsoever it is Allah's will to guide, He expands his breast for Islam, and (for) whomsoever it is His will to lead astray, He makes his breast constricted, tight as though he were ascending upwards* (6:125).

He [Khaythamah] continued: Imam al-Ṣādiq said to Mūsá b. Ashyam: "Do you know what *ḥaraj* (tight) means?"

He answered, "No."[2]

The Imam said by his hand[3] as he joined his fingers to illustrate something solid and impenetrable and remarked: "Nothing can either enter or exit it."[4]

Author's comment: The Imam's interpretation of *ḥaraj* (tight) matches the definition we quoted above from al-Rāghib [*al-Mufradāt*].

(9) Udaym [or Ādam] b. al-Ḥurr said: Once I was in a meeting with Imam al-Ṣādiq, where Mūsá b. Ashyam asked him about a verse in the Book of God. The Imam explained it for him. After a while a man came and asked the Imam about the same verse. The Imam gave him a totally different explanation than what he had told Mūsá b. Ashyam.

Ibn Ashyam explained the rest as follows: Thus I was assailed by thoughts of suspicion. It was as though my heart was being torn

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1 *Al-Kāfī*, via its chain of narration, on the authority of al-Ḥalabī. This hadith has also been narrated al-ʿAyyāshī in his *Tafsīr*, on the authority of Abū Jamīlah, on the authority of ʿAbd-Allāh b. Jaʿfar, from his brother Mūsá.

2 The Arabic text of the narration here shows that Khaythamah was not present there, but has narrated this from Mūsá b. Ashyam. (Trans.)

3 Apparently "saying" here means showing with the hand. The meaning is: "He showed his hand while sticking his fingers together, and said…." (Trans.)

4 *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, on the authority of Abū Baṣīr. A similar account is narrated in *Tafsīr al-burhān*, on the authority of al-Ṣadūq. The first part of the hadith has also been narrated by al-Barqī in *al-Maḥāsin*, on the authority of Khaythamah, from Imam al-Bāqir.

to pieces by knives. I said to myself: "Look what I have done! I have left Abū Qatādah—who does not mistake even a single word like *wāw*—in Syria and have come to a person who makes such a big mistake." As I was thinking this, another man came in and asked the Imam about the exact same verse. He gave him another answer that was opposite to his answers to me and the other man who had asked him after me. This made the matter clear to me and I realized that the Imam was intentionally doing this. So I started having other thoughts.

Then Imam al-Ṣādiq turned to me and said, "O Ibn Ashyam! Do not entertain such thoughts," and he told me the thoughts that I was having. Then he said, "O Ibn Ashyam! Indeed God entrusted [kingdom and authority] to Solomon son of David, as He told him: *This is Our free gift, therefore give freely or withhold, without reckoning* (38:39). Similarly, He entrusted [His religion] to His Prophet, as He says: *And whatever the Messenger gives you, accept it; and from whatever he forbids you, keep back* (59:7). Whatever He entrusted to His Prophet, he entrusted to us. O Ibn Ashyam! *Therefore (for) whomsoever it is Allah's will to guide, He expands his breast for Islam, and (for) whomsoever it is His will to lead astray, He makes his breast constricted, tight* (6:125). Do you know what *ḥaraj* (tight) means?"

I replied, "No."

The Imam said by his hand as he joined his fingers to illustrate something solid and impenetrable and added: "It is something that nothing can either enter or exit."[1]

Author's comment: There are several narrations that explain what is meant by entrustment (*tafwīḍ*) [of religion] to the Prophet and the Imams from his progeny. However, what is meant in the above narration in particular is that God has informed them about His Book in such a way that is not limited to only one or two interpretations. They also have authority, by God's permission, to disseminate whatever they want of that knowledge. This can be inferred from the sense of entrustment in the story of Solomon son of David, based on the Qur'anic verse in the above narration. It could also be that the Imam recited the other verse [6:125] in

1 *Al-Ikhtiṣāṣ*, via its chain of narration.

order to show this point. However, it is more apparent that he meant to describe the condition of the hearts, in accordance to the agitation and disturbance that afflicted Mūsá b. Ashyam.

(10) Concerning the same verse (6:125) *Tafsīr al-Qummī* says: This [tightness] is like a tree that is surrounded by many trees, such that it cannot grow its branches on either the right or the left. As a result, it will rise upward with no end to its tightness.

Author's comment: This hadith also matches the definition of *ḥaraj* (tight) by al-Rāghib.

(11) Concerning *thus does Allah lay uncleanness* (al-rijs) *upon those who do not believe* (6:125) Imam al-Ṣādiq said: It [uncleanness] means *shakk* (doubt, suspicion, hesitation).

Author's comment: This is a case of *taṭbīq* (application, matching), where the hadith gives one instance and example of the term.

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Verses 128-135

وَ يَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيعاً يا مَعْشَرَ الْجِنِّ قَدِ اسْتَكْثَرْتُمْ مِنَ الْإِنْسِ وَ قالَ أَوْلِياؤُهُمْ مِنَ الْإِنْسِ رَبَّنَا اسْتَمْتَعَ بَعْضُنا بِبَعْضٍ وَ بَلَغْنا أَجَلَنَا الَّذِي أَجَّلْتَ لَنا قالَ النَّارُ مَثْواكُمْ خالِدِينَ فِيها إِلاَّ ما شاءَ اللَّهُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ حَكِيمٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٢٨﴾ وَ كَذلِكَ نُوَلِّي بَعْضَ الظَّالِمِينَ بَعْضاً بِما كانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿١٢٩﴾ يا مَعْشَرَ الْجِنِّ وَ الْإِنْسِ أَ لَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِنْكُمْ يَقُصُّونَ عَلَيْكُمْ آياتِي وَ يُنْذِرُونَكُمْ لِقاءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هذا قالُوا شَهِدْنا عَلى أَنْفُسِنا وَ غَرَّتْهُمُ الْحَياةُ الدُّنْيا وَ شَهِدُوا عَلى أَنْفُسِهِمْ أَنَّهُمْ كانُوا كافِرِينَ ﴿١٣٠﴾ ذلِكَ أَنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ رَبُّكَ مُهْلِكَ الْقُرى بِظُلْمٍ وَ أَهْلُها غافِلُونَ ﴿١٣١﴾ وَ لِكُلٍّ دَرَجاتٌ مِمَّا عَمِلُوا وَ ما رَبُّكَ بِغافِلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٣٢﴾ وَ رَبُّكَ الْغَنِيُّ ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ إِنْ يَشَأْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ وَ يَسْتَخْلِفْ مِنْ بَعْدِكُمْ ما يَشاءُ كَما أَنْشَأَكُمْ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّةِ قَوْمٍ آخَرِينَ ﴿١٣٣﴾ إِنَّ ما تُوعَدُونَ لَآتٍ وَ ما أَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ ﴿١٣٤﴾ قُلْ يا قَوْمِ اعْمَلُوا عَلى مَكانَتِكُمْ إِنِّي عامِلٌ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ تَكُونُ لَهُ عاقِبَةُ الدَّارِ إِنَّهُ لا يُفْلِحُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿١٣٥﴾

(6:128) *And on the day when He shall gather them all together: O assembly of jinn! You took away a great part of humankind. And their friends from among humankind shall say: Our Lord! Some of us profited by others and we have reached our appointed end which Thou didst appoint for us. He shall say: The fire is your abode, to abide in it, except as Allah wills; surely your Lord is Wise, Knowing.*

(6:129) *And thus do We authorize some of the wrongdoers over others on account of what they earned.*

(6:130) *O assembly of jinn and humankind! Did there not come to you messengers from among you, relating to you My communications and warning you of the meeting of this day of yours? They*

shall say: We bear witness against ourselves; and this world's life deceived them, and they shall bear witness against their own souls that they were disbelievers.

(6:131) *That is because your Lord would not destroy towns unjustly while their people were heedless.*

(6:132) *And all have degrees according to what they do; and your Lord is not heedless of what they do.*

(6:133) *And your Lord is the Self-Sufficient, the Lord of mercy; if He wills, He may take you off, and make what He wills successors after you, even as He raised you up from the seed of another people.*

(6:134) *Surely what you are promised will come to pass and you cannot thwart (God).*

(6:135) *Say: O my people! Act according to your status; I too am acting; so you will soon come to know, for whom (of us) will be the (good) end of the abode; surely the unjust shall not be successful.*

Introduction

These verses are connected to the previous set of verses. They explain the meaning of *wilāyah* (authority, guardianship, friendship) that God has given to some wrongdoers over others, such as giving authority to devils over the disbelievers. This, however, is not an act of injustice [by God], because they will realize on the Day of Resurrection that what they did—such as associating partners with God and committing sins—was only by their own bad choice. They were deceived by the life of this world despite receiving God's communications and being warned about the Last Day. Thus they fell into injustice, but the unjust are far from salvation [on that day].

In other words, God's decree (*qaḍāʾ*) does not take away one's free will, which is the basis of accountability, retribution, felicity and damnation. Nor does human choice contradict God's decree. Rather, what God has decreed is that certain humans will certainly follow demonic leaders and guardians *by their own choice and volition*. God's decree does not cancel the free will of humankind such that they have no choice but to follow the devils. They are neither forced by God nor by the devils to carry on the path of wretchedness, to choose polytheism, and to commit sins and injustice. Nay, for God is needless of them. He does not have any interest in what they have so that He would wrong them for it. Instead, He has

created them by His mercy and has urged them to move toward it, but they wrong [themselves] and thus fail to succeed.

Commentary

وَ يَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيعاً يا مَعْشَرَ الْجِنِّ قَدِ اسْتَكْثَرْتُمْ مِنَ الْإِنْسِ وَ قالَ أَوْلِياؤُهُمْ مِنَ الْإِنْسِ رَبَّنَا اسْتَمْتَعَ بَعْضُنا بِبَعْضٍ وَ بَلَغْنا أَجَلَنَا الَّذِي أَجَّلْتَ لَنا قالَ النَّارُ مَثْواكُمْ خالِدِينَ فِيها إِلاَّ ما شاءَ اللَّهُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ حَكِيمٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٢٨﴾

(6:128) ***And on the day when He shall gather them all together: O assembly of jinn! You took away a great part*** **(istakthartum, from** istikthār**)** ***of humankind. And their friends from among humankind shall say: Our Lord! Some of us profited by others and we have reached our appointed end which Thou didst appoint for us. He shall say: The fire is your abode, to abide in it, except as Allah wills; surely your Lord is Wise, Knowing.***

Akthara and *istakthara* mean "to bring much of something" or "to do much of an act." Saying that the jinn had *istikthār* of humankind does not mean that the jinn literally "bring" humankind, because God is the One Who brings them all into this world and shall summon them on the Day of Resurrection. Instead, what is meant is that the jinn have gained much of humankind within their jurisdiction and domain of influence, which is their ability to deceive and tempt. Their deception and temptation is through the *wilāyah* (authority, guardianship, friendship) that the jinn [that is, devils] have over humankind. This, however, is not a kind of *wilāyah* where one group imposes and forces the other group into something. Rather, it means a two-sided relationship and interaction between them, where the followers choose to go after the leaders in search of their own interest, and the leaders take control of the affairs of the followers because of some benefit that they enjoy for wielding authority over them and managing their affairs. There is some interest for the jinn in deceiving humankind and taking charge of them, and there is some gain for humankind in following their temptations and allurement, for they pave the road to their material pleasures and personal interests.

This idea can be seen in the confession that will be made by the friends of jinn from humankind: *Our Lord! Some of us profited by others*. It means: "We [humans] profited from the pleasures of this world and its ornaments

through the temptations and allurement of the jinn, and they profited from what they desired through us, until we ended where we ended."

***… and we have reached our appointed end* (ajalanā) *which Thou didst appoint for us…*:** Given the above explanation, *ajal* here does not mean the end of their life. Instead, it means "a limit that God set for their being" or "a degree that they reached based on their actions." In other words, it means the level of existential actualization (*fiʿliyyah*) that they achieve, not the time line which marks the end of their life. The meaning would be: "Some of us profited by others through their own evil choice and wicked actions. Through this voluntary journey we reached the end that You had decreed for us, which is that we ended up as wrongdoers and disbelievers."

The verse up to here [*which Thou didst appoint for us*] means: "And on the day when God shall gather them all to complete His argument against them, He will tell the jinn: 'O assembly of jinn! Certainly you managed to gain control over much of humankind and deceive them.' Their friends among humankind will acknowledge the reality of the matter by saying, 'Our Lord! Some of us profited by others. That is, we humans profited by the jinn as we enjoyed the beauties of this world and the cravings of our lower souls through their enticement. And they profited by us because we followed the temptations that they used to whisper and inspire to us. We persisted with this way until we reached the end of our course, which is this degree that we have according to our actions and this wretched life that we have actualized for ourselves.'"

This confession of humankind reveals that even though this *ajal* (end, term) is something appointed by God, they reach it through following a path of mutual interest, which is something that they pursue by their free will. Given this point, it is possible to deduce that "jinn" here means specifically devils that whisper in the hearts of both humankind and jinn.[1]

***… He shall say: The fire is your abode* (mathwākum)*, to abide in it, except as Allah wills; surely your Lord is Wise, Knowing*:** This is God's response to the wrongdoers and His judgment about them. His verdict is: *The fire is your abode…*

Mathwá is *ism makān* (noun of place, locative noun) derived from the verb *thawá yathwī thawā*ʾ, which means "to stay in a fixed and stable manner." Therefore, saying that "the fire is your *mathwá*" means that "it is

1 Therefore "jinn" here does not include righteous jinn which are mentioned in verse 72:14. The evil whisperers of jinn are mentioned in Chapter 114. (Trans.)

a place where you shall stay and not leave." This sense is then emphasized by saying: *to abide in it*.

***… except as Allah wills…*:** This exception shows that God does not lose His power because of this decree, but He continues to have it as before. Hence, He *can* take them out of the fire even though He *does not*.

***… surely your Lord is Wise, Knowing*:** The address here is to the Prophet. The verse's ending serves to explain and justify the content of the verse.

وَ كَذٰلِكَ نُوَلِّی بَعْضَ الظّٰالِمِينَ بَعْضاً بِما كانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿١٢٩﴾

(6:129) ***And thus do We authorize* (nuwallī, from wilāyah) *some of the wrongdoers over others on account of what they earned.***

This verse extends and applies the idea mentioned in the last verse to the case of giving authority and control to some wrongdoers over others. It follows the same principle: the followers benefit from the leaders because of their temptations and allurement which leads them to commit sins and injustice, to the point that God gives authority to the leaders over the followers, and places the latter under the *wilāyah* (authority, guardianship, friendship) of the former.[1]

1 As the reader can see, it is difficult—if not impossible—to translate the word *wilāyah*. Many English translators have translated *wilāyah* in these verses as "friendship," and *awliyāʾ* (plural of *walī*) as "friends." This word choice matches the sense of *mutual* interest that the author has inferred from *some of us profited by others* (6:128). However, the verses clearly denote a sense of authority, guardianship and control that the jinn exercise over humankind. *Some of us profited by others* is an indefinite proposition (*qaḍiyyah muhmalah*) which does not necessarily imply that *both sides* benefited from one another, although that can be true in its place and can be explained by the author's interpretation. Instead, given the context of the verse, it is more apparent that "some of us" refers specifically to the jinn (or devils) and "others" refers specifically to the humankind. The verse primarily indicates a one-sided *istimtāʾ* (enjoyment, profit, benefit), referring to the authority that the devils enjoyed over their human followers. Similarly, verse 6:129 is not about mere friendship between the wrongdoers, but is about giving authority to some over others. This verse can be closely matched with the verse: *Surely We have made the devils to be the guardians* (awliyāʾ) *of those who do not believe* (7:27). Overall, *wilāyah* and its derivatives are rarely ever used in the Qur'an for mere friendship between two sides at the same level, but almost always they involve a sense of authority, hierarchy and hegemony. *Walī* and *mawlá* are used for

***… on account of what* (bi-mā) *they earned*:** The letter *bāʾ* (by, for, because) in *bi-mā* indicates either causality or exchange. It means that this authorization is retribution for the wrongdoers in exchange for the wrong that they committed. It is not an unprecedented initiative taken by God, but it is a consequence of their sin. This idea is also seen in the verse: *He causes many to err by it [His parable], and many He leads aright by it! But He does not cause to err by it (any) except the transgressors* (2:26).

The verse is expressed in the first person, where God is the speaker and the Prophet is the audience. This means a shift of address from the last verse [which was not in the first person]. It indicates that the polytheists are not worthy of receiving this address. It is stated in the first person because it resembles conferring a secret.[1] There are also other shifts of address in these verses. Their rhetorical purpose should be clear for those who contemplate them.

يا مَعْشَرَ الْجِنِّ وَ الْإِنْسِ أَ لَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِنْكُمْ يَقُصُّونَ عَلَيْكُمْ آياتِي وَ يُنْذِرُونَكُمْ لِقاءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هذا قالُوا شَهِدْنا عَلى أَنْفُسِنا وَ غَرَّتْهُمُ الْحَياةُ الدُّنْيا وَ شَهِدُوا عَلى أَنْفُسِهِمْ أَنَّهُمْ كانُوا كافِرِينَ ﴿١٣٠﴾

(6:130) ***O assembly of jinn and humankind! Did there not come to you messengers from among you, relating to you My communications and warning you of the meeting of this day of yours? They shall say: We bear witness against ourselves; and this world's life deceived them, and they shall bear witness against their own souls that they were disbelievers.***

This verse is a response to refute a possible implicit objection. The argument in the last two verses was based on the confession of the wrongdoers that they put themselves under the authority of devils by their own

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both sides of a relationship of authority: for both the master and the servant, or the superior and the inferior. However, when the Qur'an uses *tawliyah* (giving *wilāyah*) and *tawallī* (assuming *wilāyah*), it is primarily concerned with only one direction of this relationship. Therefore, *nuwallī* (from *tawliyah*) in verse 6:129 does not mean making two groups friends with each other, where the two groups profit by one another, but it means giving authority to one group over the other, where the superiors profit by their subordinates. (Trans.)

1 In other words, verse 6:128 is a report of what shall happen on the Day of Judgment. Then in verse 6:129, it is as if God is stepping back and whispering a secret to His Prophet. (Trans.)

evil choice.

One may raise the following objection against this argument: It is true that they had free will in what they did, but perhaps they did not know that their sins and enjoyment would lead them to perdition, would establish the authority of wrongdoers and devils over them, would result in their eternal damnation, and would rule out their chance of salvation forever. This means that they were heedless of this consequence even though they had overall knowledge about the evilness and enormity of their deeds. If so, then punishing a heedless person is wrong.

God refutes this possibility in this verse. He asks them whether or not His messengers came to them to remind them of God's signs and communications, and to warn them of the Day of Gathering and Reckoning. Once they confess that they rejected what the messengers brought to them, God's argument becomes complete and His proof becomes binding against them.

The meaning is: "We shall address them all and say, 'O assembly of jinn and humankind! Is not true that messengers of your kind—which We sent—came to you? Did they not relate to you My communications which show the truth of religion? Did they not warn you of the meeting of this day, which is the Day of Resurrection? Did they not tell you that surely God shall make you stand in a position of accountability, shall reckon your deeds, and shall repay you for what you did: good for good, and evil for evil?' When We ask them about these, they will admit and say, 'We bear witness against ourselves that the messengers came to us, related to us Your communications, and warned us of the meeting on this day.' They will bear witness against themselves that they were disbelievers in what the messengers brought, meaning that they rejected their message despite having knowledge, not out of heedlessness."

The above interpretation should clarify three points:

(1) *From among you* shows that overall the messengers were of the same kind as the audience, which include both jinn and humankind. It means that the messengers were not other creatures—like angels—such that the audience [as a whole] would find them unfamiliar, would be unable to relate to them, and would not understand what they say. However, there is no indication in the verse that each of jinn and humankind had messengers of their own kind.

(2) "Bearing witness" is repeated because there are two testimonies

mentioned in the verse. The first is their confession that the messengers came to them, related God's communications to them, and warned them of the Day of Resurrection. The second testimony is their confession to being disbelievers in what the messengers brought, as opposed to being heedless of them. Some exegetes have said that the first "bearing witness" means that they were present and witnessed when they committed disbelief and disobedience in this world [called *ḥaml al-shahādah*]. Then the second "bearing witness" means their confession and testimony in the hereafter about their disbelief in this world [called *adāʾ al-shahādah*]. However, both of these reduce to witnessing to their disbelief in this world. Therefore, their suggested interpretation is not a sufficient explanation of the repetition in the verse.

(3) *And this world's life deceived them*: This is a side note or parenthetical remark that is stated to clarify a potential question that may spring to the mind. It was said above that these disbelievers profited from one another [indicating their free will], and received God's messengers who recited His communications to them and warned them of the Last Day [indicating their knowledge]. Hence, one may ask: How come they pursued the path of damnation and caused their own destruction despite having knowledge and choice? This sentence answers that by saying that the life of this world deceived them, such that whenever a light of truth shined in their hearts and they had a glimpse of good, their base desires and vices rushed to them and thereby covered them in layers of darkness. That is what veiled them from the truth and blinded their sight from seeing and observing it.

ذٰلِكَ أَنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ رَبُّكَ مُهْلِكَ الْقُرٰى بِظُلْمٍ وَ أَهْلُها غافِلُونَ ﴿١٣١﴾

(6:131) ***That is because*** **(dhālika an)** ***your Lord would not destroy towns unjustly*** **(bi-ẓulm)** ***while their people were heedless.***

Given the theme and context of the verse, the demonstrative pronoun "that" (*dhālika*) refers to the content of the previous verses. What is implied by the Arabic particle *an* (lit. "that") is *li-an* (because, for that), where the omitted letter *lām* shows *taʿlīl* (justification, explanation). The meaning is: "That which We said above—about sending messengers to awaken them by Our communications and to warn them of the Day of Resurrection—was because it is not God's custom to destroy the people of towns and mete out His wrath and punishment to them as long as they

are unaware of two things: (1) what He wants from them, which is to obey Him; and (2) what He shall do to them if they do not comply. That is an injustice that is far from Him.

It is true that they end up in damnation as decreed and appointed by God, and it is He Who gives authority to some of them over others, but He does not take away their power to obey Him and does not cancel their free will. They *chose* to associate partners with God and disobey Him. Then He sent messengers to them to relate His communications to them and warn them of the meeting of the Day of Reckoning [6:130]. Yet, they rejected the messengers and insisted on their transgression and defiance [6:130]. As a result, God penalized them by giving authority to some of them over others [6:129] and decreeing that the Fire shall be their abode [6:128]. Therefore, they asked for their own destruction with knowledge and out of their own choice. It is not that God destroyed them in a state of heedlessness so that it may count as injustice, for indeed He is a Just Ruler.

The above explanation should clarify three points:

(1) The expression *your Lord would not* shows a consistent custom of God. All of God's actions are according to an ongoing custom and a straight path, as He says: *Surely my Lord is on the straight path* (11:56). Saying "would not" (*lam yakun*) implies this sense [of a continual custom].

(2) "Destroying the towns" means decreeing that they shall be wretched in this world and punished in the hereafter, as the context suggests. It does not mean sending an exterminating punishment in this world.

(3) *Bi-ẓulm* (unjustly, by injustice) refers to injustice by God, not by the people of the towns. It would be unjust of Him if He were to destroy them while they are heedless.

وَ لِكُلٍّ دَرَجاتٌ مِمَّا عَمِلُوا وَ ما رَبُّكَ بِغافِلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٣٢﴾

(6:132) ***And all have (*li-kull*) degrees according to what they do; and your Lord is not heedless of what they do.***

What is meant by "all" (*kull*) is "both groups mentioned above." The meaning is: "And all of the jinn and humankind have degrees of actions, meaning that they have different actions which result in their difference of degrees. And your Lord is not heedless of their actions."

وَ رَبُّكَ الْغَنِيُّ ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ إِنْ يَشَأْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ وَ يَسْتَخْلِفْ مِنْ بَعْدِكُمْ ما يَشاءُ كَما أَنْشَأَكُمْ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّةِ قَوْمٍ آخَرِينَ ﴿١٣٣﴾

(6:133) ***And your Lord is the Self-Sufficient, the Lord of mercy; if He wills, He may take you off, and make what He wills successors after you, even as He raised you up from the seed of another people.***

This is a general statement that negates God's injustice against His creatures. *Ẓulm* (injustice, oppression, wrong) means "placing something where it does not belong." It can takes place in the form of either acting or refraining [while one should do otherwise]. There can be two causes for any violation of a right:

(1) To make a gain or avoid a loss either for oneself or for someone that one likes. This reduces to a need on the part of the subject, in one way or another.

(2) Not because of any need, but because of an inner wickedness and hard-heartedness, which makes the subject indifferent to the pain and suffering that afflicts the other side. This does not emanate from some need in the subject, but it is a result of some moral vice.

However, God is clear and free from both of these evil qualities. He is: (1) a Rich and Self-Sufficient Lord that is never touched by any form of need or lack; and (2) a possessor of unconditional mercy which He pours upon everything according to its condition and capacity. Thus, He does not wrong anyone. This is what can be deduced from His words: *And your Lord is the Self-Sufficient, the Lord of mercy*….

The verse means: "And your Lord is the One Who is absolutely *ghanī* (self-sufficient, opulent, rich), without any poverty or need whatsoever. He also has an absolute mercy which encompasses all things." The implication of this is that He can take you away according to His self-sufficiency, and replace you thereafter with other creatures that He brings through His mercy. The proof for this is that He brought you forth by His mercy from the seed of another people whom He took away as He was needless of them.

Here God has used the particle *mā* (what, that) instead of the particle *man* (who, whom): the verse says *what He wills* as opposed to "whom He wills."[1] This suggests a sense of vagueness which points to the vastness of His power.

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1 The difference between them is that the particle *mā* (what, that) is commonly used for unintelligent beings, while the particle *man* (who, whom) is commonly used for intelligent beings. There are, however, Qur'anic examples of opposite usages for both terms. The author's point is based on their primary meaning and common usage. (Trans.)

إِنَّ ما تُوعَدُونَ لَآتٍ وَ ما أَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ ﴿١٣٤﴾

(6:134) ***Surely what you are promised will come to pass and you cannot thwart (God).***

This verse refers to the divine ordainment of the resurrection and retribution. That is *what you are threatened with* by means of revelation. These promises shall surely come to pass, and you cannot thwart God and render Him helpless in the sense that you cannot avoid or prevent the occurrence of any of His promises and ordainments. This verse emphasizes the promise of reward and the threat of punishment that were mentioned previously.

قُلْ يا قَوْمِ اعْمَلُوا عَلى مَكانَتِكُمْ إِنِّي عامِلٌ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ تَكُونُ لَهُ عاقِبَةُ الدَّارِ إِنَّهُ لا يُفْلِحُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿١٣٥﴾

(6:135) ***Say: O my people! Act according to your status* (makānatikum)*; I too am acting; so you will soon come to know, for whom (of us) will be the (good) end of the abode* (ʿāqibat al-dār)*; surely the unjust shall not be successful.***

Makānah means "the position where something rests and its current condition or status." *ʿĀqibah* means "the end of something." It is said that *ʿāqibah* is originally a *maṣdar* (gerund, verbal noun) like *ʿuqbá*.[1] Saying that "so-and-so had *ʿāqibat al-dār* (the end of the abode)" is a way of saying that "he succeeded in his effort and achieved his goal." This verse refers back to an earlier verse which started the current discussion: *Follow what is revealed to you from your Lord; there is no god but He; and withdraw from the polytheists* (6:106).

The meaning is: Say to the polytheists, "O my people! Act according to your current position and state of polytheism and disbelief"—which is a threat expressed in the form of an imperative. "Continue the wrong and injustice that you are doing, for indeed I too shall act: I shall adhere to the belief which I have been blessed with, and shall call others to monotheism. Soon you will know who will accomplish and succeed in what he is doing. You will come to know that I am the one who will succeed, not you, because you are unjust due to your polytheism and iniquity, and the

1 Therefore the original meaning of *ʿāqibah* and *ʿuqbá* is "ending," but they are used as the condition or place where something ends. (Trans.)

unjust shall not be successful."

Some have said that "I too am acting" is the speech of God, where He declares that He shall act according to His promise of resurrection and retribution. However, this is not true because: (1) it does not match the context and flow of the verse [which suggest that the speaker is the Prophet]; and (2) it does not match the following part of the verse: *So you will soon come to know, for whom (of us) will be the (good) end of the abode.*

Examining Narrations

(1) Concerning *And thus do We authorize some of the wrongdoers over others* (6:129) *Tafsīr al-Qummī* says: [It means] We will bring everyone under the authority of the guardians that they accepted [in this world], such that they will be together on the Day of Resurrection.

(2) Imam al-Bāqir said: God does not avenge a wrongdoer except by means of another wrongdoer. This is the meaning of what He says: *And thus do We authorize some of the wrongdoers over others* (6:129).[1]

Author's comment: It is not clear how the verse implies the sense of *exclusivity* found in this narration.

(3) Usāmah b. Zayd purchased a slave girl for one hundred dinars on credit, payable in one month. When the Prophet heard about it he said: Are you not astonished by Usāmah purchasing something on a one-month loan? Indeed Usāmah has prolonged hopes. By the One in Whose hand is my life, I have never shut my eyes except that I thought I will be seized by death before I open my eyelids; I have never opened my eyes except that I thought I will be seized by death before I shut them; and I never took a morsel [of food] except that I thought I will choke on it to death before I swallow it down my throat. O children of Adam! If you are intelligent, count yourselves among the dead. By the One in Whose hand is my life: *Surely what you are promised will come to pass and you cannot thwart (God)* (6:134).[2]

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1 *Al-Kāfī*, via its chain of narration, on the authority of Abū Baṣīr.

2 *Al-Durr al-*manthūr, on the authority of Ibn Abī al-Dunyā's *al-Amal*, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, al-Bayhaqī's *al-Shuʿab*, on the authority of Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī.

Verses 136-150

وَ جَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ مِمَّا ذَرَأَ مِنَ الْحَرْثِ وَ الْأَنْعامِ نَصِيباً فَقالُوا هذا لِلَّهِ بِزَعْمِهِمْ وَ هذا
لِشُرَكائِنا فَما كانَ لِشُرَكائِهِمْ فَلا يَصِلُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَ ما كانَ لِلَّهِ فَهُوَ يَصِلُ إِلى
شُرَكائِهِمْ ساءَ ما يَحْكُمُونَ ﴿١٣٦﴾ وَ كَذلِكَ زَيَّنَ لِكَثِيرٍ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ قَتْلَ أَوْلادِهِمْ
شُرَكاؤُهُمْ لِيُرْدُوهُمْ وَ لِيَلْبِسُوا عَلَيْهِمْ دِينَهُمْ وَ لَوْ شاءَ اللَّهُ ما فَعَلُوهُ فَذَرْهُمْ وَ ما
يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿١٣٧﴾ وَ قالُوا هذِهِ أَنْعامٌ وَ حَرْثٌ حِجْرٌ لا يَطْعَمُها إِلاَّ مَنْ نَشاءُ بِزَعْمِهِمْ وَ
أَنْعامٌ حُرِّمَتْ ظُهُورُها وَ أَنْعامٌ لا يَذْكُرُونَ اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهَا افْتِراءً عَلَيْهِ
سَيَجْزِيهِمْ بِما كانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿١٣٨﴾ وَ قالُوا ما فِي بُطُونِ هذِهِ الْأَنْعامِ خالِصَةٌ لِذُكُورِنا
وَ مُحَرَّمٌ عَلى أَزْواجِنا وَ إِنْ يَكُنْ مَيْتَةً فَهُمْ فِيهِ شُرَكاءُ سَيَجْزِيهِمْ وَصْفَهُمْ إِنَّهُ
حَكِيمٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٣٩﴾ قَدْ خَسِرَ الَّذِينَ قَتَلُوا أَوْلادَهُمْ سَفَهاً بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَ حَرَّمُوا ما
رَزَقَهُمُ اللَّهُ افْتِراءً عَلَى اللَّهِ قَدْ ضَلُّوا وَ ما كانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١٤٠﴾ وَ هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْشَأَ
جَنَّاتٍ مَعْرُوشاتٍ وَ غَيْرَ مَعْرُوشاتٍ وَ النَّخْلَ وَ الزَّرْعَ مُخْتَلِفاً أُكُلُهُ وَ الزَّيْتُونَ
وَ الرُّمَّانَ مُتَشابِهاً وَ غَيْرَ مُتَشابِهٍ كُلُوا مِنْ ثَمَرِهِ إِذا أَثْمَرَ وَ آتُوا حَقَّهُ يَوْمَ حَصادِهِ
وَ لا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ ﴿١٤١﴾ وَ مِنَ الْأَنْعامِ حَمُولَةً وَ فَرْشاً كُلُوا مِمَّا
رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ وَ لا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُواتِ الشَّيْطانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ ﴿١٤٢﴾ ثَمانِيَةَ
أَزْواجٍ مِنَ الضَّأْنِ اثْنَيْنِ وَ مِنَ الْمَعْزِ اثْنَيْنِ قُلْ آلذَّكَرَيْنِ حَرَّمَ أَمِ الْأُنْثَيَيْنِ أَمَّا
اشْتَمَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ أَرْحامُ الْأُنْثَيَيْنِ نَبِّئُونِي بِعِلْمٍ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صادِقِينَ ﴿١٤٣﴾ وَ مِنَ الْإِبِلِ
اثْنَيْنِ وَ مِنَ الْبَقَرِ اثْنَيْنِ قُلْ آلذَّكَرَيْنِ حَرَّمَ أَمِ الْأُنْثَيَيْنِ أَمَّا اشْتَمَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ أَرْحامُ
الْأُنْثَيَيْنِ أَمْ كُنْتُمْ شُهَداءَ إِذْ وَصَّاكُمُ اللَّهُ بِهذا فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرى عَلَى اللَّهِ
كَذِباً لِيُضِلَّ النَّاسَ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٤٤﴾ قُلْ لا أَجِدُ

فِي ما أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ مُحَرَّماً عَلى طاعِمٍ يَطْعَمُهُ إِلاَّ أَنْ يَكُونَ مَيْتَةً أَوْ دَماً مَسْفُوحاً أَوْ لَحْمَ خِنزِيرٍ فَإِنَّهُ رِجْسٌ أَوْ فِسْقاً أُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ بِهِ فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ باغٍ وَ لا عادٍ فَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٤٥﴾ وَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ هادُوا حَرَّمْنا كُلَّ ذِي ظُفُرٍ وَ مِنَ الْبَقَرِ وَ الْغَنَمِ حَرَّمْنا عَلَيْهِمْ شُحُومَهُما إِلاَّ ما حَمَلَتْ ظُهُورُهُما أَوِ الْحَوايا أَوْ مَا اخْتَلَطَ بِعَظْمٍ ذلِكَ جَزَيْناهُمْ بِبَغْيِهِمْ وَ إِنَّا لَصادِقُونَ ﴿١٤٦﴾ فَإِنْ كَذَّبُوكَ فَقُلْ رَبُّكُمْ ذُو رَحْمَةٍ واسِعَةٍ وَ لا يُرَدُّ بَأْسُهُ عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿١٤٧﴾ سَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا لَوْ شاءَ اللَّهُ ما أَشْرَكْنا وَ لا آباؤُنا وَ لا حَرَّمْنا مِنْ شَيْءٍ كَذلِكَ كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ حَتَّى ذاقُوا بَأْسَنا قُلْ هَلْ عِنْدَكُمْ مِنْ عِلْمٍ فَتُخْرِجُوهُ لَنا إِنْ تَتَّبِعُونَ إِلاَّ الظَّنَّ وَ إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلاَّ تَخْرُصُونَ ﴿١٤٨﴾ قُلْ فَلِلَّهِ الْحُجَّةُ الْبالِغَةُ فَلَوْ شاءَ لَهَداكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿١٤٩﴾ قُلْ هَلُمَّ شُهَداءَكُمُ الَّذِينَ يَشْهَدُونَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ حَرَّمَ هذا فَإِنْ شَهِدُوا فَلا تَشْهَدْ مَعَهُمْ وَ لا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْواءَ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآياتِنا وَ الَّذِينَ لا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ وَ هُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ يَعْدِلُونَ ﴿١٥٠﴾

(6:136) *And they set apart a portion for Allah out of what He has created of crops and cattle, and they say: This is for Allah—in their make-believe—and this for our associates; then what is for their associates, it reaches not Allah, and whatever is (set apart) for Allah, it reaches their associates; evil is that which they judge.*

(6:137) *And thus their associates have decorated for most of the polytheists the killing of their children, that they may cause them to perish and obscure for them their religion; and if Allah had willed, they would not have done it. Therefore leave them and that which they forge.*

(6:138) *And they say: These are cattle and crops prohibited, none shall eat them except such as we will—in their make-believe—and cattle whose backs are forbidden, and cattle on which they would not mention Allah's name—forging a lie against Him; He shall requite them for what they forged.*

(6:139) *And they say: What is in the wombs of these cattle is specially for*

our males, and forbidden to our wives, and if it be stillborn, then they are all partners in it; He will reward them their attribution (of falsehood to Allah); surely He is Wise, Knowing.

(6:140) *They are lost indeed who kill their children foolishly without knowledge, and forbid what Allah has provided them, forging a lie against Allah; they have indeed gone astray, and they are not the followers of the right course.*

(6:141) *And He it is Who produces gardens (of vine), trellised and untrellised, and palms and seed-produce of which the fruits are of various sorts, and olives and pomegranates, like and unlike; eat of its fruit when it bears fruit, and pay the due of it on the day of its harvest, and do not act extravagantly; surely He does not love the extravagant.*

(6:142) *And of cattle (He created) beasts of burden and those that (are like a) carpet; eat of what Allah has provided you and do not follow the footsteps of Satan; surely he is your open enemy.*

(6:143) *Eight in pairs—two of sheep and two of goats. Say: Has He forbidden the two males or the two females or that which the wombs of the two females contain? Inform me with knowledge if you are truthful.*

(6:144) *And two of camels and two of cows. Say: Has He forbidden the two males or the two females or that which the wombs of the two females contain? Or were you witnesses when Allah enjoined you this? Who, then, is more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah that he should lead the people astray without knowledge? Surely Allah does not guide the unjust people.*

(6:145) *Say: I do not find in that which has been revealed to me anything forbidden for an eater to eat of except that it be what has died of itself, or blood poured forth, or flesh of swine—for that surely is unclean—or that which is a transgression, other than (the name of) Allah having been invoked on it; but whoever is driven to necessity, not desiring nor exceeding the limit, then surely your Lord is Forgiving, Merciful.*

(6:146) *And to those who were Jews We made unlawful every animal having claws, and of oxen and sheep We made unlawful to them the fat of both, except what their backs carry or the entrails or what is mixed with bones: that We punished them on account of*

their rebellion, and We are surely Truthful.

(6:147) *But if they deny you, then say: Your Lord is the Lord of All-encompassing mercy; and His punishment cannot be averted from the guilty people.*

(6:148) *Those who are polytheists will say: If Allah had willed we would not have associated (aught with Him) nor our fathers, nor would we have forbidden (ourselves) anything; even so did those before them reject until they tasted Our punishment. Say: Have you any knowledge with you so you could bring it forth to us? You only follow uncertainty and you only speculate.*

(6:149) *Say: Thus Allah's is the conclusive argument; for had He willed, He would certainly guide you all.*

(6:150) *Say: Bring your witnesses who should bear witness that Allah has forbidden this, then if they bear witness, do not bear witness with them; and follow not the low desires of those who reject Our communications and of those who do not believe in the hereafter, and they make (others) equal to their Lord.*

Commentary

These verses argue against the polytheists concerning several laws that were commonly practiced by them such as rules pertaining to lawful foods. They clarify God's rule in these matters.

وَ جَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ مِمَّا ذَرَأَ مِنَ الْحَرْثِ وَ الْأَنْعامِ نَصِيباً فَقالُوا هذا لِلَّهِ بِزَعْمِهِمْ وَ هذا لِشُرَكائِنا فَما كانَ لِشُرَكائِهِمْ فَلا يَصِلُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَ ما كانَ لِلَّهِ فَهُوَ يَصِلُ إِلى شُرَكائِهِمْ ساءَ ما يَحْكُمُونَ ﴿١٣٦﴾

(6:136) ***And they set apart a portion for Allah out of what He has created*** **(dharaʾa, from dharʾ)** ***of crops*** **(al-ḥarth)** ***and cattle, and they say*** **(fa-qālū)*****: This is for Allah—in their make-believe*** **(bi-zaʿmihim)*****—and this for our associates; then what is for their associates, it reaches not Allah, and whatever is (set apart) for Allah, it reaches their associates; evil is that which they judge.***

Dharʾ means "to create" in the sense of original creation. Apparently its root meaning is *ẓuhūr* (to manifest, to appear, to show). *Ḥarth* is a synonym for *zarʿ* (crop, tillage, cultivation). *Zaʿm* means "belief," but it is usually used for incorrect beliefs. Therefore, adding *in their make-believe*

serves to glorify God and set Him clear from their claim that *this is for Allah*. This is similar to the glorification in the verse: *And they say: The Beneficent has taken to Himself a son. Glory be to Him* (21:26).

***… and this for our associates; then what is for their associates…*:** The verse attributes the associates to the polytheists because the polytheists were the ones who believed in these gods and held them to be the associates of Allah. Such attribution is similar to saying "the leaders of disbelief (*aʾimmat al-kufr*)," "their Imams" and "their *awliyāʾ* (guardians, friends, adherents)."[1] Some exegetes have said that the verse refers to their gods as "their associates" because the polytheists used to allot some of their property to these gods and thereby make them their partners [in their business and trade].

Either way, these two sentences—*they say: This is for Allah—in their make-believe* and *this for our associates*—serve to elaborate what is briefly mentioned at the beginning of the verse: *And they set apart a portion for Allah out of what He has created*. Hence, the letter *fāʾ* (lit. "so, then, therefore," translated as "and") in *fa-qālū* indicates the addition of further elaboration and interpretation. These two sentences also set the ground for the subsequent part of the verse: *then what is for their associates, it reaches not Allah, and whatever is (set apart) for Allah, it reaches their associates*. This consequence is also indicated by the letter *fāʾ* ("then" in *then what is for their associates…*).[2]

The claims narrated from them in this verse imply a ruling that has three problems: (1) It is wrong and baseless to begin with. (2) It is a false ascription to God.[3] (3) It is disdainful to God because it gives priority to the idols over Him. That is why the verse says: *evil is that which they judge*. The rest of the verse should be clear.

وَ كَذٰلِكَ زَيَّنَ لِكَثِيرٍ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ قَتْلَ أَوْلادِهِمْ شُرَكاؤُهُمْ لِيُرْدُوهُمْ وَ لِيَلْبِسُوا عَلَيْهِمْ دِينَهُمْ وَ لَوْ شاءَ اللَّهُ ما فَعَلُوهُ فَذَرْهُمْ وَ ما يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿١٣٧﴾

1 See verses 9:12, 2:257, 6:121 and 6:128. (Trans)

2 The author's objective in this paragraph is to explain God's choice of the letter *fāʾ* to connect the different parts of the verse. (Trans.)

3 It is a false ascription to God because they held this as a sacred and obligatory practices that God has made incumbent upon them. (Trans.)

(6:137) ***And thus their associates*** **(shurakāʾuhum)** ***have decorated*** **(zayyana)** ***to most of the polytheists the killing of their children*** **(qatla awlādihum)*****, that they may cause them to perish and obscure for them their religion; and if Allah had willed, they would not have done it. Therefore leave them and that which they forge.***

Here is a detailed description of how all of the major reciters besides Ibn ʿĀmir have recorded the verse:

(1) *Zayyana* is in an active verb [which means that "their associates have decorated"].

(2) *Qatl* (killing) is the object of decoration. It is *manṣūb* in terms of inflection, indicating that it is the *mafʿūl* (object) of the verb *zayyana*.

(3) *Awlādihim* (their children, their sons) is the object of killing which is annexed to it. It means: "the killing of their children," which as a whole is the object of decoration.

(4) *Shurakāʾuhum* (their associates) is the subject (*fāʿil*) of the sentence, meaning that their associates have decorated this killing and have made it appear fair to them.

Given the above, the meaning would be: "The special position that the idols had in the hearts of the polytheists and the illusory love that the polytheists had for the idols made it seem fair and commendable to them to kill their children as sacrifices in order to win the favor of the gods."

This practice is recorded in the history of ancient idol-worshipers and Sabeans. It is different from the custom of burying their daughters alive, which was common among Banū Tamīm tribe among Arabs. The verse does not say *banāt* (daughters, girls) in particular but rather *awlād* (children, sons).

Here are a few other interpretations for "associates" (*shurakāʾ*) suggested by other exegetes: (1) devils; (2) the managers or custodians of the idol-house; (3) deviators among the people (*al-ghuwāh*).[1]

The meaning based on Ibn ʿĀmir's recitation would be: "The killing of their children by their associates has been decorated for most of the polytheists." In his recitation:

(1) *Zuyyina* is a passive verb [which means that "the killing has been decorated"].

(2) *Qatl* (killing) is what has been decorated. It is *marfūʿ* in terms of

1 This can mean either "the leaders of misguidance" in particular, or "those who astray" in general. The first meaning is more likely in this context. (Trans.)

inflection, indicating that it is the *fāʿil* (subject) of the verb *zuyyina*.

(3) *Awlādahum* (their children, their sons) is the object of killing. It is *manṣūb* in terms of inflection.

(4) *Shurakāʾihim* (their associates) is the subject (*fāʿil*) of killing. It is *majrūr* in terms of inflection because killing has been annexed to it. This means that "their children" has separated the *muḍāf* (annexed noun, construct noun) and the *muḍāf ilayhi* (genitive noun, that to which annexation is made).

***… that they may cause them to perish* (li-yurdūhum, from irdāʾ) *and obscure* (li-yalbisū, from labs) *for them their religion…*:** *Irdāʾ* means *ihlāk* (to kill, to destroy). The pronouns "them" and "their" in this part of the verse all refer to "most of the polytheists." It means causing the polytheists to perish because of: (1) being ungrateful for God's blessings; (2) being unjust to His creatures [that is, the people]; and (3) mixing, confusing and obscuring their religion for them by making falsehood seem like truth.[1]

Some have said that *irdāʾ* means "to kill" literally. Then the pronoun "them" in *cause them to perish* would refer to "their children," while the other two pronouns—"them" and "their" in *and obscure for them their religion*—would refer to "most of the polytheists." One could also say that all three pronouns refer to "the polytheists" in a sense.[2] Either way, the meaning of the verse should be clear.

وَ قالُوا هذِهِ أَنْعامٌ وَ حَرْثٌ حِجْرٌ لا يَطْعَمُها إِلاَّ مَنْ نَشاءُ بِزَعْمِهِمْ وَ أَنْعامٌ حُرِّمَتْ ظُهُورُها وَ أَنْعامٌ لا يَذْكُرُونَ اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهَا افْتِراءً عَلَيْهِ سَيَجْزِيهِمْ بِما كانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿١٣٨﴾

(6:138) *And they say: These are cattle and crops prohibited* (ḥijr), *none shall eat them except such as we will—in their make-believe—and cattle whose backs are forbidden, and cattle on which they would not mention Allah's name—forging a lie against Him; He shall requite them for what they forged.*

Ḥijr means *manʿ* (to forbid, to prevent, to block). The next part of the

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1 Therefore, *labs* here means *khalṭ* (to mix, to confuse, to obscure). (Trans.)

2 The pronouns would all refer to polytheists in general, where one pronoun refers to their children who are killed in particular, and the other two to most of their adults. (Trans.)

verse interprets what this means: *none shall eat them except such as we will*. In other words: "These cattle and crops are prohibited except for anyone that we choose to permit." It is narrated that this verse refers to the food that the polytheists used to offer to their gods, which was forbidden to eat except for the male servants of the gods [at the idol-house].

***…and cattle whose backs are forbidden…*:** This sentence involves an implied omitted verb. It can be interpreted in two ways: (1) *And* they say: These are *cattle whose backs are forbidden*. (2) *And* they have *cattle whose backs are forbidden*. These cattle refer to *al-sāʾibah*, *al-baḥīrah* and *al-ḥāmī* which God has rejected in the verse: *Allah has not ordained (the making of) a* baḥīrah *or a* sāʾibah *or a* waṣīlah *or a* ḥāmī *but those who disbelieve fabricate a lie against Allah, and most of them do not understand* (5:103).[1] Some exegetes have said that the current verse refers to *some* of the four categories in verse 5:103, based on the difference of opinion about what they mean. We discussed these views there.[2]

***… and cattle on which they would not mention Allah's name…*:** The implied meaning is, "*and* they have *cattle on which…*," where the verb "have" is omitted since it is implied. This refers to their practice of slaughtering animals as offerings while declaring the name of their idols instead of God's name. Other suggested views are: (1) It refers to their practice during the hajj season when they would abstain from riding some animals [which were specifically designated as hajj offerings]. (2) It has a general meaning, referring to any use of animals without mentioning God's name. The rest of the verse is clear.

وَ قالُوا ما فِي بُطُونِ هذِهِ الْأَنْعامِ خالِصَةٌ لِذُكُورِنا وَ مُحَرَّمٌ عَلى أَزْواجِنا وَ إِنْ يَكُنْ مَيْتَةً فَهُمْ فِيهِ شُرَكاءُ سَيَجْزِيهِمْ وَصْفَهُمْ إِنَّهُ حَكِيمٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٣٩﴾

(6:139) ***And they say: What is in the wombs of these cattle is specially for our males, and forbidden to our wives, and if it be stillborn, then they are all partners in it; He will reward them their attribution (of falsehood to Allah); surely He is Wise, Knowing.***

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1 Note that *anʿām* (which is used in the current verse) is primarily used for camels. That is why the suggested interpretation does not include *waṣīlah* in verse 5:103, because *waṣīlah* apparently refers to a type of sheep. (Trans.)

2 See volume 11 of the English translation, pp. 194ff. (Trans.)

What is in the wombs of these cattle refers to the fetus of *baḥīrah* and *sā'ibah* camels.[1] They had a law that if the fetus was born alive, it would be lawful to eat for men, but not for women. However, if it was born dead, then both men and women could eat from it. Other suggested views are: (1) It refers to the milk of these animals. (2) It refers to both their offspring and their milk.

***… He will reward them their attribution…*:** He will pay their very *act of attribution* back to them, because it will return to them as a burden and punishment. Therefore, this expression involves a specific sense of reward and retribution. Other suggested views are: (1) The implied meaning is, "He will reward them *for* their attribution (*bi-waṣfihim*)," where "for" (letter *bā'* in Arabic) is omitted. (2) The implied meaning is, "He will reward them *the reward* of their attribution (*jazā'a waṣfihim*)," where "reward" (*jazā'*) is omitted. The rest of the verse should be clear.

قَدْ خَسِرَ الَّذِينَ قَتَلُوا أَوْلادَهُمْ سَفَهاً بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَ حَرَّمُوا ما رَزَقَهُمُ اللَّهُ افْتِراءً عَلَى اللَّهِ قَدْ ضَلُّوا وَ ما كانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١٤٠﴾

(6:140) ***They are lost indeed who kill their children foolishly without knowledge, and forbid what Allah has provided them, forging a lie against Allah; they have indeed gone astray, and they are not the followers of the right course.***

This verse refutes the above-mentioned laws and practices that the polytheists had forged and falsely attributed to God, including the killing of their children and the prohibition of certain types of cattle and crops. It says that this was rather a loss on their part and deviation from the right way.

The verse involves three notable descriptions: (1) it describes their act of killing their children as *foolishly without knowledge*; (2) it refers to the cattle and crops [mentioned in verses 6:138-139] as *what Allah has provided them*; and (3) it describes their prohibition of these provisions as *forging a lie against Allah*. All of these serve to explain and justify why *they are lost indeed*. It is as if the verse is saying: "They lost for killing their children *because* it was a foolish act that they committed without knowledge. They also lost for forging a lie against God by prohibiting certain types of cattle

1 The author has defined these in detail under verse 5:103; volume 11 of the English translation. (Trans.)

and crops *because* these foods are God's provision. It is far from God to provide them with something and then prohibit it for them."

In the next four verses—*And He it is Who produces gardens…* (6:141-144)—God clarifies their error in prohibiting the crops and cattle in spite of being God's provision. He discusses this in detail and elaborates His argument rationally, based on the welfare of His servants. Then He moves on to provide a transmitted argument for it based on revelation by saying: *Say: I do not find in that which has been revealed to me anything forbidden for an eater to eat of…* (6:145).

Overall, the next five verses [6:141-145] boil down to the following: "They went astray by prohibiting various types of crops and cattle without any proof to justify it. Their practice was neither rational, nor in service of the people's welfare, nor supported by any revelation from God. Hence, they fell into loss by doing so."

وَ هُوَ الَّذِی أَنْشَأَ جَنَّاتٍ مَعْرُوشاتٍ وَ غَیْرَ مَعْرُوشاتٍ وَ النَّخْلَ وَ الزَّرْعَ مُخْتَلِفاً أُكُلُهُ وَ الزَّيْتُونَ وَ الرُّمَّانَ مُتَشابِهاً وَ غَيْرَ مُتَشابِهٍ كُلُوا مِنْ ثَمَرِهِ إِذا أَثْمَرَ وَ آتُوا حَقَّهُ يَوْمَ حَصادِهِ وَ لا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ ﴿١٤١﴾

(6:141) ***And He it is Who produces gardens (of vine), trellised* (maʿrūshāt)** ***and untrellised, and palms and seed-produce of which the fruits are of various sorts, and olives and pomegranates, like and unlike; eat of its fruit when it bears fruit, and pay the due of it on the day of its harvest, and do not act extravagantly; surely He does not love the extravagant.***

Al-shajarat al-maʿrūshah refers to a plant that climbs with its branches being supported by a trellis, such as a vine. The root meaning of *ʿarsh* is *rafʿ* (to rise, to climb). Therefore, "trellised gardens" are gardens of vines and the like. "Untrellised gardens" would be ones with trees standing on their trunks without a support.

***… and seed-produce of which the fruits are of various sorts…*:** This refers to edible seeds and grains, such as wheat, barley, lentils and peas.

***… and olives and pomegranates, like and unlike…*:** Given the context, this phrase means that each of these fruits has like and unlike types. This refers to similarity of taste, shape, color and so on.

***… eat of its fruit when it bears fruit, and pay the due of it on the day of its harvest, and do not act extravagantly; surely He does not love the extravagant*:** The theme of this verse is to refute the impression that

certain foods are unlawful, as it says that it is *God* Who has produced these gardens, palms, seeds and so on. Hence, the imperative verb "eat" only proves that it is *lawful* to eat of these fruits, not that it is *obligatory* [or even *recommended* for that matter]. The implied meaning based on the context is: "And He it is Who has grown gardens, palms, seeds and so on. Then He has ordered you to eat of the fruits of these plants, has commanded you to pay the due of it on the day of its harvest, and has forbidden you to be extravagant. Is there any clearer evidence than this for the lawfulness of these foods?"

***… and pay the due of it* (ḥaqqahu) *on the day of its harvest…*:** *Ḥaqq* here means "a payment or due that is fixed and established." This "due" is ascribed to a masculine pronoun *hāʾ* (it or him) in *pay the due of it*. Thus three possibilities have been suggested for it: (1) The pronoun refers to "fruit" [in *eat of its fruit*]. (2) The pronoun refers to "the poor" [that is, "and pay their due"] because the due is related to them [as its beneficiaries]. (3) The pronoun refers to God [that is, "and pay His due"] in accordance with the pronoun in the subsequent part of the verse: *He does not love the extravagant*. The "due" is attributable to God in the sense that He has ordained it.

This means that the poor have an overall right in the crops of seeds and fruits, which should be delivered to them on the day of their harvest. This is a basic rule of reason (*ʿaql*) which is also confirmed by divine law. This is different from *zakāh* (poor-rate, almsgiving) as a specific rite that was legislated in the Islamic code of law (shariah) because of two reasons: (1) some of the items mentioned in the verse are not subject to the law of *zakāh*; and (2) the law of *zakāh* was legislated in Medina, whereas this verse was revealed prior to that in Mecca. Nonetheless, it could be that this verse was a root and basis for the legislation of *zakāh*. The laws which were defined and enacted in Medina were often outlined in brief and vague terms in the Meccan chapters. One example is seen below, where God enumerates what He has forbidden in general terms: *Say: Come I will recite what your Lord has forbidden to you… and do not draw nigh to indecencies, those which are apparent and those which are concealed* (6:151).

***… and do not act extravagantly…*:** That is: "Do not exceed the proper limits in your lifestyle and consumption." In case of the owners, some examples of extravagance would be if they eat and consume wastefully, if they give away their property excessively, or if they spend it for

inappropriate purposes. In case of the poor, their extravagance would be if they waste the donations that they receive or other similar misuses. In other words, this is an unconditional statement that is addressed to all people.

Here is a list of other interpretations suggested by the exegetes:

The prohibition is specifically addressed to owners.

It is addressed to the authority who is in charge of collecting charity.

It means, "Do not be extravagant by consuming it before the time of its harvest, because that would reduce the allocated share of the poor."

It means, "Do not shirk part of your obligatory duty."

It means, "Do not spend it in the way of God's disobedience."

All of these views are against the unconditional sense and context of the verse.[1]

وَ مِنَ الْأَنْعامِ حَمُولَةً وَ فَرْشاً كُلُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ وَ لا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُواتِ الشَّيْطانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ ﴿١٤٢﴾

(6:142) ***And of cattle (He created) beasts of burden*** **(ḥamūlah)** ***and those that (are like a) carpet*** **(farshan)*****; eat of what Allah has provided you and do not follow the footsteps of Satan; surely he is your open enemy.***

Ḥamūlah means "large animals" in the sense that they are capable of *ḥaml* (carrying a load). *Farsh* means "small animals" in the sense that they are close to the ground much like a carpet (*farsh*), or in the sense that they may be trampled on like one steps on a carpet.

***… eat of what Allah has provided you…*:** This indicates the lawfulness of eating these animals, as an approval and confirmation of the rule of reason. It is similar to what was said in the last verse: *Eat of its fruit* (6:141).

***… and do not follow the footsteps of Satan; surely he is your open enemy*:** That is: "Do not follow Satan's course with regards to these things which have been made lawful for you. Do not place your feet in the footsteps of Satan by illegalizing what God has legalized for you." As we said in a previous discussion, following the footsteps of Satan means illegalizing what God has legalized without knowledge.[2]

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1 In other words, the verse is not restricted to any of these meanings, although they can all be examples and applications of it. (Trans.)

2 This refers to verse 2:168. See volume 3 of the English translation. (Trans.)

ثَمانِيَةَ أَزْواجٍ مِنَ الضَّأْنِ اثْنَيْنِ وَ مِنَ الْمَعْزِ اثْنَيْنِ قُلْ آلذَّكَرَيْنِ حَرَّمَ أَمِ الْأُنْثَيَيْنِ أَمَّا اشْتَمَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ أَرْحامُ الْأُنْثَيَيْنِ نَبِّئُونِي بِعِلْمٍ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صادِقِينَ ﴿١٤٣﴾

(6:143) ***Eight in pairs*** **(azwāj)***—two of sheep and two of goats. Say: Has He forbidden the two males or the two females or that which the wombs of the two females contain? Inform me with knowledge if you are truthful.*

This verse elaborates the general reference to "cattle" in the last verse. It adds to their rebuke and criticism by bringing up all forms and aspects of these animals. Therefore, *eight in pairs* is interpretative of *beasts of burden and those that (are like a) carpet* (6:142).

Azwāj is the plural of *zawj*, which is used for either member of a pair, as well as the pair itself. These verses count four species of livestock: sheep, goat, cow and camel. Since each species has male and female, they amount to eight pairs.

The meaning is: "He has created eight pairs: two pairs of sheep, meaning male and female, and two pairs of goats in the same sense. Say: Has God forbidden the males of sheep and goats or has He forbidden their females, or has He forbidden what is contained in the wombs of the females? Inform me about this with knowledge if you are truthful."

وَ مِنَ الْإِبِلِ اثْنَيْنِ وَ مِنَ الْبَقَرِ اثْنَيْنِ قُلْ آلذَّكَرَيْنِ حَرَّمَ أَمِ الْأُنْثَيَيْنِ أَمَّا اشْتَمَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ أَرْحامُ الْأُنْثَيَيْنِ أَمْ كُنْتُمْ شُهَداءَ إِذْ وَصَّاكُمُ اللَّهُ بِهذا فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِباً لِيُضِلَّ النَّاسَ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٤٤﴾

(6:144) ***And two of camels and two of cows. Say: Has He forbidden the two males or the two females or that which the wombs of the two females contain? Or were you witnesses when Allah enjoined you this? Who, then, is more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah that he should lead the people astray without knowledge? Surely Allah does not guide the unjust people.***

Given our interpretation of the last verse, the meaning of this verse should be clear up to *females contain*. Some exegetes have said that the four instances of saying "two" (*ithnayn*) in these verses refer to tame and wild types of the four species [as opposed to male and female].

***… Or were you witnesses when Allah enjoined you this? …*:** The word "or" indicates a dichotomy, where one part of it is omitted because it can be inferred from the other part. The implied meaning is: "Which of the two ways led you to conclude this [that God has forbidden these animals]? Was it through (1) contemplating some rational or transmitted evidence for it; or (2) being a witness when God forbade it and hearing it from Him directly?"

***… Who, then* (fa-man)*, is more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah that he should lead the people astray without knowledge? Surely Allah does not guide the unjust people*:** The letter *fāʾ* (so, then, therefore) in *who, then, is more unjust* shows that this is a consequence and conclusion drawn from the previous part of the verse. The previous part of the verse—*or were you witnesses*…—is a rhetorical question that implies a negation. Since they have no answer, the effective meaning here is: "Who, then, is more unjust than you?"

***… than he who forges a lie…*:** This is an indirect reference to the polytheists who were the audience of the verse. Instead of addressing them directly in second person, the verse gives their description in third person. This way of making a general statement serves to explain why they are the most unjust of people, which is implied by the previous rhetorical question in the verse. It means: "No one is more unjust than you because you have forged a lie against God in order to lead the people astray without knowledge. And since you are unjust, you shall not be guided, for indeed God does not guide the unjust people."

قُلْ لا أَجِدُ فِي ما أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ مُحَرَّماً عَلى طاعِمٍ يَطْعَمُهُ إِلاَّ أَنْ يَكُونَ مَيْتَةً أَوْ دَماً مَسْفُوحاً أَوْ لَحْمَ خِنزِيرٍ فَإِنَّهُ رِجْسٌ أَوْ فِسْقاً أُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ بِهِ فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ باغٍ وَ لا عادٍ فَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٤٥﴾

(6:145) ***Say: I do not find in that which has been revealed to me anything forbidden for an eater to eat of except that it be what has died of itself, or blood poured forth, or flesh of swine—for that surely is unclean—or that which is a transgression, other than (the name of) Allah having been invoked on it; but whoever is driven to necessity, not desiring nor exceeding the limit, then surely your Lord is Forgiving, Merciful.***

The meaning of the verse is clear. This verse is similar to verses 2:173 and 5:3. Our discussion under those two verses would be relevant here.

وَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ هادُوا حَرَّمْنا كُلَّ ذِى ظُفُرٍ وَ مِنَ الْبَقَرِ وَ الْغَنَمِ حَرَّمْنا عَلَيْهِمْ شُحُومَهُما إِلاَّ ما حَمَلَتْ ظُهُورُهُما أَوِ الْحَوايا أَوْ مَا اخْتَلَطَ بِعَظْمٍ ذلِكَ جَزَيْناهُمْ بِبَغْيِهِمْ وَ إِنَّا لَصادِقُونَ ﴿١٤٦﴾

(6:146) ***And to those who were Jews We made unlawful every animal having claws* (ẓufur)*, and of oxen and sheep We made unlawful to them the fat of both, except what their backs carry or the entrails* (al-ḥawāya) *or what is mixed with bones: that* (dhālika) *We punished them on account of their rebellion, and We are surely Truthful.***

Ẓufur is the singular form of *aẓfār*. It means "fingernail." *Ḥawāyā* means *mabāʿir* (intestines, entrails, bowels). *Majmaʿ al-bayān* says:

It could be that *al-ḥawāyā* is added to "backs" (*ẓuhūr*), where it would count as *marfūʿ* in terms of inflection. The meaning would be: "or what the entrails carry." Another possibility is that *al-ḥawāyā* is added to "except what," where it would count as *manṣūb* in terms of inflection.[1] The particle *mā* (what, that) in *what is mixed with bones* is added to the earlier particle *mā* in the verse [in *except what their backs carry*].[2]

The first possibility is more likely. *Majmaʿ al-bayān* further adds:

> "That" (*dhālika*)—in *that We punished them*—refers to the punishment that was meted out to them. Therefore it should be taken as the second object of the verb *jazaynā* (lit. "We punished"), where it would count as *manṣūb* in terms of inflection. The meaning would be: "We gave them that as punishment for their rebellion." Sometimes one says, "Zayd I hit" (*Zaydun ḍarabtu*) where he means "I hit Zayd" (*ḍarabtuhu*). This form of expression—where the object is mentioned in place of the subject with *marfūʿ* inflection—can only be allowed in poems due to limitations of

1 The meaning would be: "We made unlawful to them the fat of both, except: (1) what their backs carry; and (2) their entrails." This makes the second exception an unconnected one (*istithnāʾ munqaṭiʿ*) because "entrails" are not a sub-category of "fat," unless it is assumed that the verse involves an omitted term. Note that the next part of the verse—*or what is mixed with bones*—is also a sub-category of "fat." This is why the author says below that the first possibility is more likely. (Trans.)

2 The meaning would be: "and except what is mixed with bones." (Trans.)

rhyme and rhythm. However, "that" (*dhālika*) here cannot be treated as having this role.[1]

Apparently this verse serves to explain and clarify a possible objection that could arise following the previous verse. It admits that some of the good things which God had provided the Children of Israel were made unlawful to them, but only as punishment for their transgression. Hence, there is no contradiction between the subsequent ban of these foods and their original and essential lawfulness otherwise. This idea is also found in the following verses: *All food was lawful to the children of Israel except that which Israel had forbidden to itself, before the Torah was revealed* (3:93); *Wherefore for the iniquity of those who are Jews did We disallow to them the good things which had been made lawful for them and for their hindering many (people) from Allah's way* (4:160).

فَإِنْ كَذَّبُوكَ فَقُلْ رَبُّكُمْ ذُو رَحْمَةٍ واسِعَةٍ وَ لا يُرَدُّ بَأْسُهُ عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ﴿١٤٧﴾

(6:147) ***But if they deny you, then say: Your Lord is the Lord of All-encompassing mercy; and His punishment cannot be averted from the guilty people.***

The meaning of the verse is clear. The verse orders the Prophet to warn the polytheists and threaten them with God's inevitable punishment in case they deny. However, this warning should be mixed with some hope so that they do not despair and give up. That is why God first says: *Your Lord is the Lord of All-encompassing mercy*.

سَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا لَوْ شاءَ اللَّهُ ما أَشْرَكْنا وَ لا آباؤُنا وَ لا حَرَّمْنا مِنْ شَيْءٍ كَذلِكَ كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ حَتَّى ذاقُوا بَأْسَنا قُلْ هَلْ عِنْدَكُمْ مِنْ عِلْمٍ فَتُخْرِجُوهُ لَنا إِنْ تَتَّبِعُونَ إِلاَّ الظَّنَّ وَ إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلاَّ تَخْرُصُونَ ﴿١٤٨﴾

(6:148) ***Those who are polytheists will say: If Allah had willed we would not have associated (aught with Him) nor our fathers, nor would we have forbidden (ourselves) anything; even so did those before them reject until they tasted Our punishment. Say: Have you any knowledge with you so you could bring it forth to us? You only follow uncertainty***

1 The translation of this part involves some elaboration to better convey the meaning. (Trans.)

and you only speculate.

This verse narrates one of the arguments of the polytheists and then refutes it by saying that they are ignorant of the real meaning of what they are saying. They say this only out of conjecture and speculation.

Incidentally, their statement is true, as mentioned in many verses in the Qur'an, but it does not imply the conclusion which they intend from it. They employed this statement in order to prove that their actions—including their polytheism and their illegalization of what God has provided them—are approved of by God and thus there is no blame on them for doing these acts. Their argument was: (a) If God had willed us to do otherwise—that is, to not associate partners with Him and to not prohibit these things—then we would have been compelled to renounce our polytheism and prohibition. (b) However, God has not willed that. (c) Thus it means that He has given us permission to associate partners with Him and prohibit these things. Therefore, there is no problem with so doing.

The fallacy with this argument is that it does not result in the above conclusion. Instead, the conclusion would be: Thus God has not compelled them. He has willed them to have choice in their actions and not to be forced. This means that they have the choice to either adopt or avoid polytheism, and whether or not to make things unlawful. For this reason God can call them to believe in His unity and to refrain from their prohibition. *Thus Allah's is the conclusive argument* (6:149), while they have no argument in what they do. Their acts are only based on uncertainty and speculation.

قُلْ فَلِلَّهِ الْحُجَّةُ الْبالِغَةُ فَلَوْ شاءَ لَهَداكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿١٤٩﴾

(6:149) ***Say: Then Allah's*** **(fa-lillāh)** ***is the conclusive argument; for had*** **(fa-law)** ***He willed, He would certainly guide you all.***

The first letter *fā*ʾ in the verse—"thus" in *thus Allah's is the conclusive argument*—indicates *tafrī*ʿ (consequence, conclusion), meaning "therefore, thus, then." The second letter *fā*ʾ in the verse—"for" in *for had He willed*—indicates *taʿlīl* (explanation, justification), meaning "because, for." This verse turns the argument of the polytheists against them based on its implication.

The meaning is: "The conclusion of your argument works against yourselves due to your ignorance, your following uncertainty, and your speculation about religious teachings. Your argument shows that *God* is

the One Who has a case here, not you! He has a binding proof against you which justifies Him to order you to abandon polytheism and stop forging lies against Him." The proof is: (a) Had He willed, He would have certainly guided you all and forced you to believe in Him, abandon polytheism, and stop prohibiting things for yourselves. (b) However, He has not compelled you to do so, but He has left you with your free will. (c) That is why He has the right to command you to stop associating partners with Him and prohibiting these foods [with your own volition].

In other words, the argument is: (a) Had God willed, He would certainly have forced you to believe; He could have guided you all. (b) However, He did not do so, which means that He has granted you choice and free will. (c) The conclusion that follows from these premises is that God is entitled to commanding you to what He has called you to. Therefore, it is God Who has an argument against you.

As we have seen in many previous verses, God clarifies that He does not force His servants to believe. He has not willed this in a *takwīnī* (existential, causal, creational) sense, which would make them forced and compelled. Instead, He has given them permission (*idhn*) to be otherwise. What is meant by *idhn* (permission, leave, authorization) here is: (1) He has given His servants the ability to choose to either act or refrain; and (2) He has removed the impediments that may stop them from exercising their free will. In terms of legislation (*tashrīʿ*), however, He may command His servants to avoid polytheism, for instance. This does not contradict His existential permission and creational will (*mashīʾah*, *mashiyyah*) that they shall have the ability to choose whether they wish to obey or not. In fact, His legislative command and prohibitions would not make sense without this existential freedom.

قُلْ هَلُمَّ شُهَداءَكُمُ الَّذِينَ يَشْهَدُونَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ حَرَّمَ هذا فَإِنْ شَهِدُوا فَلا تَشْهَدْ مَعَهُمْ وَ لا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْواءَ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآياتِنا وَ الَّذِينَ لا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ وَ هُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ يَعْدِلُونَ ﴿١٥٠﴾

(6:150) ***Say: Bring*** **(halumma)** ***your witnesses who should bear witness that Allah has forbidden this*** **(hādhā)*****, then if they bear witness, do not bear witness with them; and follow not the low desires of those who reject Our communications and of those who do not believe in the hereafter, and they make (others) equal to their Lord.***

Halumma means *hātū* (bring). It is a noun that functions as a verb (called *ism fiʿl*). It is used in the same form for singular, dual and plural. *Shahādah* (witness, testimony) in this verse means "testifying and bearing witness in support for something" (called *adāʾ al-shahādah*). The demonstrative pronoun "this" (*hādhā*) refers to the above-mentioned unlawful items according to the polytheists.

The command here is meant to challenge them and show their inability to produce such witnesses. It reveals that they are liars in claiming that God has forbidden these foods. This is an indirect [and rhetorically expressive] way of saying that these things are not forbidden.

***… then if they bear witness, do not bear witness with them …*:** This sentence shows escalation. It means: "They have no witnesses to testify in their favor, which proves that God has not forbidden these things. But even if they bear witness to the prohibition of these foods, then you do not bear witness along with them,[1] because there has been no prohibition. Their testimony is rather worthless because they are a people who follow their base desires."

***… and follow not the low desires of those who reject Our communications and of those who do not believe in the hereafter, and they make (others) equal to their Lord*:** This is an interpretative addition to the previous part of the verse: *Then if they bear witness, do not bear witness with them*. It means: "If you bear witness with them [that is, if you approve their testimony] that would be tantamount to following their low desires, because their testimony is based on following their low desires. The reason being that they are a people who: (1) have denied God's clear signs and communications; (2) do not believe in the hereafter; and (3) set some of God's creatures—such as the idols—equal to their Lord. Only those who follow their base desires would act in this manner despite receiving the complete explanations and the clear proofs [of God's true religion].

Examining Narrations

(1) Concerning verse 6:136 (*then what is for their associates, it reaches not Allah…*), it is narrated from Ibn ʿAbbās, Qatādah and our Imams: If part of what they had dedicated to the idols was mixed with what they had dedicated to God, then they would separate

1 In other words, "do not buy into their testimony." (Trans.)

and return it [back to the idols], but if part of what they had dedicated to God was mixed with what they had dedicated to the idols, then they would leave it and say, "God is richer [and thus needless of this]." Similarly, if water were to flow from a field that they had dedicated to God to a field that they had assigned to the idols, they would not stop it, but if water were to flow from a field that they had assigned to the idols to a field that they had dedicated to God, they would block it and say, "God is richer [and thus needless of this]."[1]

(2) Concerning verse 6:137 (*And thus their associates have decorated for most of the polytheists…*) *Tafsīr al-Qummī* says: It means that their forefathers decorated for them the killing of their children.

(3) Concerning *And they say: These are cattle and crops prohibited* (ḥijr), (6:138) *Tafsīr al-Qummī* says: *Ḥijr* means *muḥarram* (prohibited, forbidden, unlawful).

(4) Concerning *And He it is Who produces gardens* (jannāt) (6:141) *Tafsīr al-Qummī* says: It [*jannāt*] means *basātīn* (gardens, orchards, groves).

(5) Concerning verse 6:141 (*and pay the due of it on the day of its harvest, and do not act extravagantly…*) Shuʿayb al-ʿAqarqūfī said: I asked Imam al-Ṣādiq about *and pay the due of it on the day of its harvest* (6:141). He replied, "[It means] a bundle of ears[2] and a handful of dates when he estimates [that is, when the owner estimates his harvest]."

Then I asked, "Can he pay this after taking it to his home?"

He answered, "No. It is more generous of him to do so before he takes it home."[3]

(6) Once Imam al-Riḍā was asked, "If the poor are not present when he [the farmer] harvests, what should he do?" He replied, "He has

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1 *Majmaʿ al-bayān*.

2 This refers to crops like wheat and barley. Given this, it is possible that the subsequent part of the hadith originally said *thamar* (fruit) as opposed to *tamr* (date), but one dot was dropped in transcription. (Trans.)

3 *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, on the authority of Aḥmad b. Idrīs, on the authority of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, on the authority of ʿAlī b. al-Ḥakam, on the authority of Abān b. ʿUthmān.

no duty [toward them]."[1]

(7) Muʿāwiyah b. al-Ḥajjāj says: I heard Imam al-Ṣādiq saying, "There are two rights in crops. One is a right that is collected from you, and one is a right that you have to pay [yourself]."
I asked, "What is the one that is collected from me, and what is the one that I have to pay?"
"The one that is collected from you," he said, "is the tithe or half of tithe. The one that you should pay is based on these words of God: *And pay the due of it on the day of its harvest* (6:141). It means to pay from your harvest something after something."
Here Muʿāwiyah adds: I do not recall exactly what he said,[2] except that he said, "You give a bundle after a bundle until you finish [harvesting]."[3]

(8) Once Imam al-Riḍā was asked about the verse *and pay the due of it on the day of its harvest, and do not act extravagantly* (6:141). He explained: My father said, "An example of extravagance in harvesting [crops] and gleaning [fruits] is to fill both hands when one wants to donate." If my father saw one of his servants donating with both hands he would call out to him, "Give with only one hand, handful after handful [of fruits], or bundle after bundle of ears."[4]

(9) Muṣādif says: Once I was with Imam al-Ṣādiq in one of his fields while they were harvesting. A beggar came asking for help. I told the beggar, "May God provide for you!" But the Imam interrupted, "Shush! You cannot say that unless you give to three [beggars]. Then it is up to you whether you want to give or withhold."[5]

(10) Once a man asked Imam al-Ṣādiq about the verse: *And pay the due of it on the day of its harvest, and do not act extravagantly; surely He does not love the extravagant* (6:141). [The Imam] said:

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1 *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, on the authority of Aḥmad b. Idrīs, on the authority of al-Barqī, on the authority of Saʿd b. Saʿd.

2 This refers to "something after something" or another statement that the Imam said afterwards. (Trans.)

3 *Al-Kāfī*, on the authority of ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm, on the authority of Ibn Abī ʿUmayr.

4 *Al-Kāfī*, via its chain of narration, on the authority of Abū Naṣr.

5 *Al-Kāfī*, via its chain of narration.

"So-and-so of the Anṣār (Medinite Supporters)"—the Imam named him—"had a farm. Whenever he harvested he would donate it all, leaving himself and his family without anything. God identified this as extravagance."[1]

Author's comment: Given that this verse was revealed in Mecca, what is meant here is matching the verse with the man's behavior [later in Medina], not that the verse was *revealed* because of this. Perhaps the man of Anṣār mentioned in this narration was Thābit b. Qays b. Shammās, as seen below.

(11) Ibn Jarīj [Jurayḥ] says: This verse was revealed about Thābit b. Qays b. Shammās. He gleaned a palm and said, "I shall feed anyone who comes to me today." Thus he fed everyone until he was left with no dates by night. Then God revealed: *And do not act extravagantly; surely He does not love the extravagant* (6:141).[2]

Author's comment: As we said, this is a Meccan verse, not a Medinite one. Therefore, it cannot include the act of Thābit b. Qays except by matching and applying the verse to a different context (*jary wa inṭibāq*).

(12) Concerning this verse [6:141] Imam al-Ṣādiq said: Give to any Muslim that comes to you. If only a polytheist comes to you, then give to him.[3]

Author's comment: There are very many narrations in this regard from Imams al-Bāqir, al-Ṣādiq and al-Riḍā.

(13) Concerning *and pay the due of it on the day of its harvest* (6:141) the Prophet said: Any ear that falls [from the shock].[4]

(14) Concerning *and pay the due of it on the day of its harvest* (6:141) Ibn ʿAbbās said: This was abrogated by [the law of] tithe and half of tithe.[5]

Author's comment: The relationship between this verse and the verse

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1 *Al-Kāfī*, via its chain of narration, on the authority of Ibn Abī ʿUmayr, on the authority of Hishām b. al-Muthanná.

2 This is narrated by al-Ṭabarī and others.

3 *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*.

4 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of Ibn al-Mundhir, al-Naḥḥās, Abū al-Shaykh and Ibn Mardawayh, on the authority of Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī.

5 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of Saʿīd b. Manṣūr, Ibn Abī Shaybah, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, al-Naḥḥās and al-Bayhaqī's *al-Sunan*.

of *zakāh* (obligatory poor-rate)[1] is not that of abrogation. Whether we take the donation mentioned in this verse to be obligatory or recommended, it does not contradict the law of *zakāh* so that we may conclude it was abrogated.

(15) Al-Ḍaḥḥāk said: [The law or verse of] *zakāh* abrogated every [mention of] charity in the Qur'an.[2]

Author's comment: The problem with the previous narration applies to this one as well.

(16) When the people of Medina gleaned their palms, they used to take some clusters to the mosque. Then beggars would go there, hit the branches with a cane, and take what fell from them. This was how they practiced the verse: *and pay the due of it on the day of its harvest* (6:141).[3]

(17) Concerning verses 6:143-144 (*Eight in pairs—two of sheep and two of goats…*) *Tafsīr al-Qummī* says: These verses interpret what God has made lawful in His Book, where He says: *and He has sent for you eight of the cattle in pairs* (39:6). The Prophet explained the pairs as follows: *Two of sheep* means "tame and wild." *And two of goats* means "tame and wild." *And two of cows* means "tame and wild." *And two of camels* means "two-humped and one-humped." God has made all of these lawful.[4]

Author's comment: We still have to investigate whether or not the word *azwāj* (pairs) in these verses—*eight in pairs—two of sheep…* (6:143-144)—has the same meaning as in the verse: *and He has sent for you eight of the cattle in pairs* (39:6). We shall discuss this later, by God's will.

(18) Once Imam al-Ṣādiq was asked about [eating the meat of] the birds and mammals of prey, followed by a mention of mice, bats, donkeys, mules and horses. The Imam said: "What is unlawful is

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1 See verses 9:60 and 9:103. (Trans.)

2 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of Abū ʿUbayd, Ibn Abī Shaybah, ʿAbd b. Ḥamīd and Ibn al-Mundhir.

3 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of Ibn Abī Shaybah, ʿAbd b. Ḥamīd and Ibn al-Mundhir and Abū al-Shaykh, on the authority of Maymūn b. Mihrān and Yazīd b. al-Aṣamm.

4 The same idea has been narrated from Imam al-Ṣādiq in *al-Kāfī*, *al-Ikhtiṣāṣ* and *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, on the authority of Dāwūd al-Raqqī and Safwān al-Jammāl.

only what God has forbidden in His Book. Yes, in the Battle of Khaybar the Messenger of God prohibited people from eating the meat of donkeys, but that was in order to spare them for carrying loads. Otherwise, the donkey is not unlawful." He then recited the verse: *Say: I do not find in that which has been revealed to me anything forbidden for an eater to eat of except that it be what has died of itself, or blood poured forth, or flesh of swine—for that surely is unclean—or that which is a transgression, other than (the name of) Allah having been invoked on it* (6:145).[1]

Author's comment: There are other narrations from Imams al-Bāqir and al-Ṣādiq which confirm this idea. In some of these narrations the Imam says, "What is unlawful is only what God has forbidden in His Book. However, people [before Islam] used to spare certain things, so we also spare them." Meanwhile, there are many narrations that prohibit eating many animals such as animals that have fangs (*anyāb*) and birds that have claws (*makhālib*). Narrations reported by Sunnis are similar in this sense. This is a legal matter that should be discussed in jurisprudence. If it is proven that there are other unlawful things besides what is forbidden in the verse, then they should be interpreted as what the Prophet prohibited on the account of being *khabīth* (bad, offensive, impure). God has approved this from him where He says: *Those who follow the unschooled messenger-prophet, whom they find written down in the Torah and the Gospel with them (who) enjoins them good and forbids them evil, and makes lawful to them the good things and makes unlawful to them impure things* (7:157).[2]

(19) Concerning verse 6:146 (*And to those who were Jews We made unlawful every animal having claws…*), it is said that Jewish kings used to prevent the poor from eating the meat of birds and the fats [of cattle]. Thus God made these things unlawful to them because of their transgression against their poor.[3]

(20) Once Imam al-Ṣādiq was asked about the verse: *thus Allah's is the conclusive argument* (6:149). He said: On the Day of Resurrection

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1 *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, on the authority of Ḥarīz.

2 This means that there are two categories of unlawful edibles: (1) What God has forbidden in the Qur'an. (2) What the Prophet has prohibited as offensive. (Trans.)

3 *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, narrated from the *Tafsīr* of ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm [al-Qummī].

> God will say to His servant, "My servant! Did you have knowledge [of right and wrong]?"
> If he says, "Yes," then God will tell him, "So why didn't you act according to your knowledge?" If he says, "I was ignorant," then God will tell him, "Why didn't you learn so that you may act?" Thus He convicts a servant. This is His conclusive argument.[1]

Author's comment: This above is one *miṣdāq* (example, application) for the verse.

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1 *Al-Amālī* of al-Ṭūsī, via its chain of narration, on the authority of Masʿadat b. Ziyād.

Verses 151-157

قُلْ تَعالَوْا أَتْلُ ما حَرَّمَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ أَلاَّ تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئاً وَ بِالْوالِدَيْنِ إِحْساناً وَ لا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلادَكُمْ مِنْ إِمْلاقٍ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُكُمْ وَ إِيَّاهُمْ وَ لا تَقْرَبُوا الْفَواحِشَ ما ظَهَرَ مِنْها وَ ما بَطَنَ وَ لا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلاَّ بِالْحَقِّ ذلِكُمْ وَصَّاكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٥١﴾ وَ لا تَقْرَبُوا مالَ الْيَتِيمِ إِلاَّ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ حَتَّى يَبْلُغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَ أَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ وَ الْمِيزانَ بِالْقِسْطِ لا نُكَلِّفُ نَفْساً إِلاَّ وُسْعَها وَ إِذا قُلْتُمْ فَاعْدِلُوا وَ لَوْ كانَ ذا قُرْبى وَ بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ أَوْفُوا ذلِكُمْ وَصَّاكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿١٥٢﴾ وَ أَنَّ هذا صِراطِي مُسْتَقِيماً فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَ لا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ذلِكُمْ وَصَّاكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٥٣﴾ ثُمَّ آتَيْنا مُوسَى الْكِتابَ تَماماً عَلَى الَّذِي أَحْسَنَ وَ تَفْصِيلاً لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَ هُدىً وَ رَحْمَةً لَعَلَّهُمْ بِلِقاءِ رَبِّهِمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٥٤﴾ وَ هذا كِتابٌ أَنْزَلْناهُ مُبارَكٌ فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَ اتَّقُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ﴿١٥٥﴾ أَنْ تَقُولُوا إِنَّما أُنْزِلَ الْكِتابُ عَلى طائِفَتَيْنِ مِنْ قَبْلِنا وَ إِنْ كُنَّا عَنْ دِراسَتِهِمْ لَغافِلِينَ ﴿١٥٦﴾ أَوْ تَقُولُوا لَوْ أَنَّا أُنْزِلَ عَلَيْنَا الْكِتابُ لَكُنَّا أَهْدى مِنْهُمْ فَقَدْ جاءَكُمْ بَيِّنَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَ هُدىً وَ رَحْمَةٌ فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ كَذَّبَ بِآياتِ اللَّهِ وَ صَدَفَ عَنْها سَنَجْزِي الَّذِينَ يَصْدِفُونَ عَنْ آياتِنا سُوءَ الْعَذابِ بِما كانُوا يَصْدِفُونَ ﴿١٥٧﴾

(6:151) *Say: Come, I will recite what your Lord has forbidden to you—that you do not associate anything with Him and show kindness to your parents, and do not slay your children for (fear of) poverty—We provide for you and for them—and do not draw nigh to indecencies, those which are apparent and those which are concealed, and do not kill the soul which Allah has forbidden*

except for the requirements of justice; this He enjoins you with that you may apply reason.

(6:152) *And do not approach the property of the orphan except in the best manner until he attains his maturity, and give full measure and weight with justice—We do not impose on any soul a duty except to the extent of its ability; and when you speak, then be just though it be (against) a relative, and fulfill Allah's covenant; this He enjoins you with that you may be mindful.*

(6:153) *And (know) that this is my path, the straight one therefore follow it, and follow not (other) ways, for they will lead you away from His way; this He enjoins you with that you may guard (against evil).*

(6:154) *Then We gave the Book to Moses complete for him who would do good, and as an elaboration of all things and a guidance and a mercy, so that they should believe in the meeting of their Lord.*

(6:155) *And this is a Book We have revealed, blessed; therefore follow it and guard (against evil) that mercy may be shown to you.*

(6:156) *Lest you say that the Book was only revealed to two parties before us and we were truly unaware of their study.*

(6:157) *Or lest you should say: If the Book had been revealed to us, we would certainly have been better guided than they, so indeed there has come to you clear proof from your Lord, and guidance and mercy. Who then is more unjust than he who rejects Allah's communications and turns away from them? We will reward those who turn away from Our communications with an evil chastisement because they turned away.*

Introduction

These verses discuss what has been universally forbidden in all divine religions. They are:

Associating partners with God,

Being unkind to parents,

Committing indecencies,

Killing an innocent soul without a just cause, which includes killing one's children in fear of poverty,[1]

1 Here the author is grouping two of the prohibitions in the verse under one category. Otherwise, most exegetes have talked about ten points in the verse.

Laying hands on the property of orphans except in good cause,
Not giving full measure and weight with justice,
Unjust speech,
Failing to fulfill God's covenant, and
Following any path other than that of God, which results in religious disagreement.

These are universal laws because we find the same points in what the previous prophets preached to their nations, as related by God in the stories of Noah, Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, Abraham, Lot, Shuʿayb (Jethro, Reuel), Moses, Jesus and others. The Qur'an says: *He has made plain to you the religion what He enjoined upon Noah and that which We have revealed to you and that which We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus—that keep to obedience and be not divided therein* (42:13). A subtle connection here is that the verb used in verse 42:13 is *tawṣiyah* (to enjoin, to advise) which is the same verb used in these three verses that talk about the God's principal prohibitions, as He says: *This He enjoins you with that you may apply reason* (6:151); *This He enjoins you with that you may be mindful* (6:152); *This He enjoins you with that you may guard (against evil)* (6:153).

Moreover, upon contemplation, it becomes clear that a divine religion cannot be complete and correct if it misses any of these commands—irrespective of how simple it is, and irrespective of how simple its intended audience may be.

Commentary

قُلْ تَعالَوْا أَتْلُ ما حَرَّمَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ أَلاَّ تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئاً وَ بِالْوالِدَيْنِ إِحْساناً وَ لا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلادَكُمْ مِنْ إِمْلاقٍ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُكُمْ وَ إِيَّاهُمْ وَ لا تَقْرَبُوا الْفَواحِشَ ما ظَهَرَ مِنْها وَ ما بَطَنَ وَ لا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلاَّ بِالْحَقِّ ذلِكُمْ وَصَّاكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٥١﴾

(6:151) ***Say: Come*** **(taʿālaw),** ***I will recite*** **(atlu, from tilāwah)** ***what your Lord has forbidden to you*** **(ʿalaykum)—** ***that you do not associate anything with Him and show kindness to your parents, and do not slay***

These three verses (6:151-153) are the closest Qur'anic approximation to the Ten Commandments, as found in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5:6-21. (Trans.)

your children for (fear of) poverty—We provide for you and for them—and do not draw nigh to indecencies, those which are apparent and those which are concealed, and do not kill the soul which Allah has forbidden except for the requirements of justice; this He enjoins you with that you may apply reason.

It is said that the *taʿāl* (lit. "come up") is derived from *ʿuluww* (height, elevation). This implies that the caller is standing at a height [in terms of etymology], even though that may not literally be true [in terms of common usage]. *Tilāwah* is similar in meaning to *qirāʾah* (to recite, to read). *ʿAlaykum* (to you, upon you, against you) can be either the complement of *I will recite* or the complement of *has forbidden*. This is an example of *al-tanāzuʿ fī al-mutaʿalliq*, where a single word serves to complement two verbs and thus the verb is not repeated twice. Some have said that *ʿalaykum* here is a noun [as opposed to a particle or preposition] which functions as a verb (called *ism fiʿl*), meaning *khudhū* (take, hold fast; in the imperative). The meaning would be: "Take and hold fast to this: *that you do not associate anything with Him and show kindness to your parents…*"[1] This, however, is not the first meaning that springs to mind in this context.

There is an apparent inconsistency here because the list is titled: *what your Lord has forbidden to you*, but what follows is sometimes stated as prohibitions and sometimes stated as commands. For example, the verses include some prohibitions such as: *do not associate anything with Him… and do not slay your children for (fear of) poverty… and do not draw nigh to indecencies*, and some commands like: *and show kindness to your parents… and give full measure and weight with justice… and when you speak, then be just…*. However, it should be noted that in the first place, the Prophet calls the people to his recitation: *Come I will recite what your Lord has forbidden…*. Therefore, what follows is expressed exactly as revealed by God [as opposed to being paraphrased and interpreted by the Prophet].

Polytheism is mentioned before all other prohibitions because it is *surely a grievous iniquity* (31:13) for which there is no hope of being forgiven by God. He says: *Surely Allah does not forgive that anything should be associated with Him, and forgives what is besides that to whomsoever He will* (4:48, 4:116). Moreover, all sins trace back to polytheism, just as all

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1 Perhaps one reason for favoring this meaning is that it explains the apparently additional negative particle *lā* (do not) in *you do not associate anything…* despite having introduced this as *what your Lord has forbidden*. (Trans.)

good deeds trace back to monotheism in one way or another.

***… and show kindness* (iḥsānan) *to your parents…*:** The word *iḥsānan* (goodness, kindness) is an object that indicates the implied omitted verb of the sentence: *aḥsinū* (do good, show kindness).[1] *Majmaᶜ al-bayān* says:

> It means that "He has enjoined kindness to parents." This is because the verb *taḥrīm* (to forbid, to prohibit) [as in *what your Lord has forbidden to you*] includes the meaning of *enjoining* the prohibition of something and *commanding* to abstain from it.[2]

There are a few other places in the Noble Qur'an that command kindness to parents right after enjoining monotheism or prohibiting polytheism. For example: *And your Lord has decreed that you shall not serve (any) but Him, and goodness to your parents* (17:23); *And when Luqmān said to his son while he admonished him: O my son! Do not associate aught with Allah; most surely polytheism is a grievous iniquity. And We have enjoined man with respect to his parents* (31:13-14).

This shows that *ᶜuqūq* (disobedience, persecution, disrespect) against one's parents is among the major sins. It is the greatest sin after associating partners with God. This is also confirmed by social convention. Human beings depend on society for their worldly and religious life. Human society is a conventional structure that relies on cross-generational love for both its building and its maintenance. This is a mutual bond of love and mercy that develops in the family, connected to the parents at one end and to the children at the other. Children need the mercy and kindness of their parents in a period when the parents naturally incline toward them. This natural attraction is a sufficient incentive for parents to show the required kindness to their children. However, an opposite story holds

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1 This is something specific to the Arabic construct of the verse. Stating an accusative ending (in this case, *iḥsānan*) instead of a verb (in this case, *aḥsinū*) sometimes simply serves to indicate the intended verb, and sometimes it shows emphasis. In this case, the emphasized interpretation of this construct would be: "Show kindness to your parents, such notable and mighty kindness." (Trans.)

2 This means that in some cases, like here, *taḥrīm* does not mean prohibition, but it means injunction. More specifically, given the context of the verse and the root meaning of *taḥrīm* (from sanctuary and sanctity), the meaning would be: "Say: Come, I will recite to you the sanctuary of sacred law which your Lord has set for you." (Trans.)

for the parents' need for the mercy and kindness of their children. Their need coincides with their age, when they are incapable of taking care of themselves, while their children are young and independent.

If it becomes widespread among humankind that children neglect and disregard their parents in the time of their need, then it will have the following consequences: (1) People will lose interest in begetting and rearing children. (2) People will stop procreation, which results in the termination of the human race. (3) People will be reluctant to establish a family and unwilling to form this small social unit. (4) People will lose interest in retaining the positions of fatherhood and motherhood. The result of all this is that there will be no affinity between a new generation of humankind and their parents, as though they are not related by blood. This means the disintegration of the society's parts as their bonds are severed and their unity is split. This is a destruction that cannot be mended by any social law, custom or convention. As a result, happiness will depart from them both in this world and in the hereafter. We shall present a complete discussion of this element of religion later, if God wills.

***… and do not slay your children for (fear of) poverty* (imlāq)*—We provide for you and for them…*:** *Imlāq* means "lack of money and provision." The verse talks about a common practice among Arabs before Islam due to widespread famine and drought. When they were threatened by poverty they would kill their children to spare them from a miserable life in hunger and need.

***… We provide for you and for them…*:** This sentence justifies the previous prohibition. It means: "You kill your children because you fear that you may not be able to provide for them, but the fact is that *you* are not their providers. Rather, it is God Who provides for you and them all, so do not kill your children."

***… and do not draw nigh to indecencies* (al-fawāḥish)*, those which are apparent and those which are concealed…*:** *Fawāḥish* is the plural of *fāḥishah*, which means "an evil and indecent act." God has described adultery, sodomy and accusing chaste women of adultery as examples of indecency in His Book.

***… which are apparent and those which are concealed…*:** Apparently this refers to indecencies that are committed openly and those that are committed in private, respectively. For example, sometimes adultery is committed publicly and openly, while sometimes one has a private and

secret affair.

Indecencies are very attractive and pleasurable things to the base carnal soul (*nafs*). The human faculty of *shahwah* (appetite, lust) inclines strongly to these acts, and the last thing that it wants to see is their prohibition. If such indecencies are legalized, then they would no longer be viewed as evil, vices, or reprehensible, and thus they will spread across the society. That would cut off the progeny[1] and destroy the family as a social unit. The end result will be the destruction of the greater human society. We shall discuss this in detail later in its appropriate place, by God's will.

Likewise, if murder and other similar indecencies are permitted, then there will be a loss of national security. This will shatter the foundation of human societies and shake its pillars.

***… and do not kill the soul which Allah has forbidden* (ḥarrama, from taḥrīm) *except for the requirements of justice…*:** The object of the verb *taḥrīm* (to forbid, to consecrate) is omitted in this sentence. The implied meaning could be either of the following: (1) "God has forbidden its killing"; or (2) "God has consecrated the soul by honoring it in His legislation in a way that preserves its blood and protects its right."[2] According to some exegetes, murder is a specific example of the indecencies which the verse just prohibited. God explicitly mentions it again to show the significance and immensity of this indecency. A similar explanation can be said about the killing of children in fear of poverty. It is mentioned separately because of its important position and applicability to the Arabs. They used to think that the fear of poverty gave the father the right to kill his children in order to preserve his dignity. They viewed fatherhood as a form of ownership.

"A forbidden soul" is the soul of either a Muslim or a non-Muslim who has a peace treaty with Muslims (called a *muʿāhid*). They cannot be killed except for a just cause, which would be either retaliation (*qiṣāṣ*, *qawad*) or religious penalty (*ḥadd*).

***… this He enjoins you with that you may apply reason*:** This sentence

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1 This can refer to either of two meanings: (1) a reduction in reproduction, which is a clear consequence of certain indecencies such as homosexuality; and (2) the confusion of lineage and a cut of ties between one generation and the next. (Trans.)

2 In the first case, the object of *taḥrīm* is "killing"; in the second case it is "the soul." (Trans.)

emphasizes the prohibitions in the verse. They are justified by saying: *that you may apply reason*. We shall discuss the connection between this justification and the five points in the verse below [under verse 6:153].

وَ لا تَقْرَبُوا مالَ الْيَتِيمِ إِلاَّ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ حَتَّى يَبْلُغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَ أَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ وَ الْمِيزانَ بِالْقِسْطِ لا نُكَلِّفُ نَفْساً إِلاَّ وُسْعَها وَ إِذا قُلْتُمْ فَاعْدِلُوا وَ لَوْ كانَ ذا قُرْبى وَ بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ أَوْفُوا ذلِكُمْ وَصَّاكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿١٥٢﴾

(6:152) ***And do not approach the property of the orphan except in the best manner until he attains his maturity, and give full measure and weight with justice—We do not impose on any soul a duty except to the extent of its ability; and when you speak, then be just though it be (against) a relative, and fulfill Allah's covenant; this He enjoins you with that you may be mindful.***

The verse prohibits "approaching" the property of the orphans in order to indicate a comprehensive meaning. This includes expenditure, investment, and any dealing with their property: it should be done in the best possible manner that preserves their property. This law is applicable until they reach maturity. At that point they are no longer orphans who are incapable of managing their property. By default they will be in charge of themselves financially, without needing their guardians to manage their funds. Given this condition, "attaining maturity" in this verse means both physical puberty and intellectual maturity. This is mentioned in the verse: *And test the orphans until they attain puberty; then if you find in them maturity of intellect, hand over to them their property, and do not consume it extravagantly and hastily, lest they attain full age* (4:6).

It should also be clear that *until he attains his maturity* does not mean that the prohibition will be *lifted* at that point, and it will be *permissible* to use the property of the orphans. Instead, this qualification indicates the period of *applicability* of the previous law—that they should not approach the property of the orphans except in the best manner. Once they mature, the subject of this law will no longer exist. Therefore, this sentence is effectively saying: "Manage the property of orphans who cannot manage and grow their property until they grows up and becomes capable of doing so."

… and give full measure and weight with justice—We do not impose on any soul a duty except to the extent of its ability…: "Giving full measure with justice" means being fair in measure and weight, without any

diminution.

***… We do not impose on any soul a duty except to the extent of its ability…*:** This sentence serves to answer a potential objection. It is as if the audience asks: "Giving full measure with justice and meeting true fairness in the real world is not possible for humans. There is no escape for human souls from approximation in these matters." Thus God replies: "We do not impose on any soul any duty except according to its capacity." It could be that this sentence applies to both commands that were mentioned prior to it in this verse: *And do not approach the property of the orphan* and *give full measure and weight*.

***… and when you speak, then be just though it be (against) a relative…*:** Blood ties and feelings call one to take the side of one's relative in order to protect his life and property against loss and misfortune. The mention of this word shows that "speaking" here pertains specifically to speech that can result in some benefit or loss for others. The command to "justice" confirms this idea because it implies that "injustice" is also a possible outcome. Therefore, this verse is about speech that is concerned with legal rights, such as testimony, judgment and *fatwá* (legal ruling, edict). The meaning is: "Watch your speech that can benefit or harm the people, and be just in what you say. Let not mercy, sympathy or any other emotion lead you to take the side of one party, causing you to modify your words and transgress the truth. Do not make a testimony or judgment that favors the side which you like and violates the right of the other side which you dislike." *Majmaʿ al-bayān* says:

> This sentence is an expressive command that has many applications, including confessions, testimonies, testaments, legal rulings, judicial verdicts, governmental laws, religious beliefs, enjoining good and forbidding evil.

***… and fulfill Allah's covenant* (ʿahd)…:** According to *al-Mufradāt* by al-Rāghib, *ʿahd* [in its verbal sense] is "to preserve and observe something under all circumstances." That is why it is used for: (1) religious commands, duties and obligations; (2) covenants, contracts and agreements between two sides; (3) *nadhr* (vow) and *yamīn* (oath).[1]

The most plausible interpretation for "God's *ʿahd*" in this verse is the

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1 *Nadhr* and *yamīn* are two specific terms in Islamic jurisprudence, where one commits oneself to do something. Their details can be found in the manuals of Islamic rulings (sing. *risālah*). (Trans.)

religious duties that God has decreed. This is because: (1) the most common usage of *ʿahd* in the Noble Qur'an is God's commandments; (2) the word *ʿahd* here is ascribed to God; and (3) it is mentioned in a context of explaining God's universal laws and commandments.[1]

It could also be that *ʿahd* here means an individual or mutual commitment that one takes upon himself in God's name. The Qur'an says: *and fulfill the promise; surely (every) promise shall be questioned* (17:34). If so, then ascribing a covenant to God in this verse would be like ascribing testimony (*shahādah*) to Him in the verse: *and we will not hide the testimony of Allah* (5:106). Such ascription is a reminder that the other side of the contract is really God.

***… this He enjoins you with that you may be mindful*:** This sentence emphasizes the rulings mentioned in the verse.

وَ أَنَّ هذا صِراطِي مُسْتَقِيماً فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَ لا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ذلِكُمْ وَصَّاكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٥٣﴾

(6:153) ***And (know) that* (anna) *this is my path, the straight one therefore follow it, and follow not (other) ways, for they will lead you away from His way; this He enjoins you with that you may guard (against evil).***

The conjunction "and" at the beginning of this verse would join the next part—*that this is…*—to *that you do not associate anything with Him* (6:151). This is based on reciting the second word of the verse with stress as *anna* (that, indeed) or without stress as *an* (meaning "that"). The word has also been recited as *inna* (indeed), which makes this verse a new statement, not a continuation of the above.

The context and flow of these verses show that the message of this verse is among the general principles and universal commandments of religion which God ordered His Prophet to convey to the people, as he was

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1 This point implies that the order to "fulfill God's covenant" is a general conclusion that refers to *all* of God's commandments, much like the last part of the verse: *this He enjoins you with that you may be mindful*. However, apparently this order is a specific command that is mentioned parallel to the other commands in the verse, which strengthens the next meaning that the author explains below: "fulfil the contracts that you make in God's name." This is also confirmed by the theme of this verse, which is justice. The verse enjoins justice in dealing with the property of orphans, justice in weight and measure, justice in testimony, and justice in maintaining contracts. (Trans.)

told: *Say: Come I will recite what your Lord has forbidden to you* (6:151). Meanwhile, those principles were already covered in the last two verses. Hence, the first part of this verse—*And (know) that this is my path, the straight one therefore follow it*—is not meant as an independent command by itself, but as a prelude to the next part—*and follow not (other) ways*—which is itself a prelude to what follows after: *for they will lead you away from His way*. Therefore, the central and ultimate message of the verse is: "Do not diverge from God's way and do not disagree in it."

This makes the current verse similar to the following verse: *He has made plain to you of the religion what He enjoined upon Noah, and that which We have revealed to you, and that which We enjoined upon Abraham, Moses and Jesus: that maintain the religion and be not divided therein* (42:13). We see a similar repetition in this verse [42:13]: the command to *maintain the religion* refers back to "the enjoined religion which God has made plain." It is repeated at the end of the verse to set the stage for the following prohibition: *be not divided therein* (42:13).

The meaning is: "Among what your Lord has commanded and prohibited is that you should not follow other ways besides this straight path which involves no internal contradiction or external failure. Following any way other than that of God will divert you from His way. This creates disagreement among you with regards to the way and makes you exit the straight path. The straight path is a consistent way without any contradiction between its parts, and without any disagreement amongst its travelers."

The speaker in these verses is the Prophet, who was told to convey these duties to the people, as per God's instruction: *Say: Come I will recite* (6:151). Hence, the possessive pronoun "my" in "my path" refers to the Prophet, because he is the one who is addressing these words to the people. In all of these three verses, God is referred to in the third person, even in the subsequent part of this verse, where it says: *for they will lead you away from His way; this He enjoins you with*. There is no problem with ascribing the "path" to the Prophet because elsewhere in the Qur'an it is ascribed to a multitude of God's servants, as He says: *Guide us on the straight path, the path of those whom Thou hast blessed* (1:6-7) and: *Those whom Thou hast blessed* are *the prophets and the truthful and the martyrs and the righteous* (4:69).

However, apparently, other exegetes have assumed unanimously that the pronoun *my* in *my path* refers to God. The meaning would be: "Come so that I recite to you what your Lord has enjoined you to. He says to

you—or His enjoinment is—that *this is My path, the straight one therefore follow it, and follow not (other) ways, for they will lead you away from His way*." This interpretation requires a transition in the speaker—not where it says "My way" but where it says "His way."[1]

Either way, in this verse God refers to the above-mentioned principal inunctions of religion as His [or his] "straight path." It is straight in two senses: (1) it has no *takhalluf* (violation, failure) in guiding its travelers and leading them to their destination; and (2) it has no *ikhtilāf* (difference, disagreement, conflict) whether between its various parts or between its travelers. As long as they adhere to this path they will certainly not disagree with one another. He then forbids the people against following other ways because those paths will undoubtedly result in failure and disagreement, for they are courses of satanic desires which are not based on any standard or structure. The way of God, on the other hand, is based on the innate human nature and creation (*fiṭrah* and *khilqah*): *There is no altering of Allah's creation; that is the right religion* (30:30).

***… this He enjoins you with that you may guard (against evil)*:** Here God emphasizes His command in this verse.

The endings of these three verses differ. The first verse ends with: *this He enjoins you with that you may apply reason* (6:151); the second verse ends with: *this He enjoins you with that you may be mindful* (6:152); and the third verse ends with: *this He enjoins you with that you may guard (against evil)* (6:153).

Here is a possible explanation for this difference: The first verse talks about things that are evidently wrong to innate human nature, including associating partners with God, disobeying one's parents, killing one's children due to poverty, approaching heinous indecencies, and murdering an innocent soul without a just cause. Humans, which are distinguished from other animals by *ʿaql* (reason, intellect), would never commit these sins unless they pursue their desires and are completely encircled by dark emotions that set a thick veil over their reason. Therefore, awakening the reason and leaving the base desires—even partially—would suffice for people to realize that these acts are forbidden and inauspicious for them

1 In other words, the verse starts as God's speech in the first person, but then it shifts to the third person, as if God refers to Himself in the third person, or as if the subsequent part of the verse is no longer God's speech but it is the Prophet who continues. (Trans.)

inasmuch as they are human. That is why the first verse ends by: *this He enjoins you with that you may apply reason* (taʿqilūna, from ʿaql) (6:151).[1]

The second verse talks about keeping away from the property of orphans, giving full measure and weight with fairness, being just in speech, and fulfilling God's covenant. These instructions are not as readily evident as the points mentioned in the first verse. In order to appreciate these rulings, one needs to not only apply reason, but also remember the general benefits and harms that human reason recognizes. Then one will realize how detrimental these sins are in destroying the foundations of society and hurting one's fellow human beings. What good is a human society if the weak and disadvantaged are not taken care of, if fairness is not observed in measures and weights, if the governments and the courts are unjust, and if the word of truth goes unheard? That is why the second verse ends by: *this He enjoins you with that you may be mindful* (6:152).

The purpose of the third verse is to prohibit people from disagreeing and deviating in religion by following ways other than that of God. The relevant justification for this prohibition is that one cannot have proper and complete *taqwá* (self-restraint, Godwariness, guarding oneself) in religion unless one abstains from these deviant ways. In order to have religious *taqwá*, one needs to first recognize what God has forbidden, and then abstain from it. This requires applying reason and being mindful. In other words, *taqwá* means abiding by the innate human nature (*fiṭrah*) which is the basis of religion, as He says: *And the soul and Him Who made it perfect, then He inspired it to understand what is right* (taqwá) *and wrong for it* (91:7-8).

God has promised the believers that if they have *taqwá* [that is, if they observe their duties to God and guard against evil], then He will assist them by a means of clarifying their way and distinguishing the truth from falsehood. He says: *And whoever is careful of (his duty to) Allah* (yattaqi Allāh, from taqwá), *He will make for him an outlet* (65:2); *If you are careful of (your duty to) Allah* (tattaqū Allāh, from taqwá), *He will grant you a distinction* (8:29).

One pursues the path of *taqwá* as long as he adheres to the way of applying reason and being mindful, and as long as he follows the course of his innate nature. One deviates from this path if he follows his desires,

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1 Another common and plausible translation is: *this He enjoins you with that you may understand*. The verb *ʿaqala* means "to understand." (Trans.)

clings to material life, and falls for the deceptive glamor of life in this world. Such a person is unbridled by his passions and desires. Thus he ends up forsaking religious *taqwá* and opposing the judgments of sound reason, not caring the least about the evil consequences that he is facing. He will be like a drunkard who does not realize what he does nor what is done to him.

The thing is that personal interests and selfish desires are very divergent. They are not governed by any regulation and their followers are not subject to any unifying system. That is why it is seldom seen that any two individuals who pursue their personal desires go a single way and keep each other's company until the end. God has mentioned many of these paths in His Book [referring to the discord among their followers]: *And so that the way of the guilty may become clear* (6:55); *And do not follow the way of the mischief-makers* (7:142); *And do not follow the path of those who do not know* (10:89). Similarly, concerning the polytheists He says: *They follow naught but conjecture and the low desires which (their) souls incline to; and certainly the guidance has come to them from their Lord* (53:23). If you research the verses about guidance, error, obedience and following, you will see that many verses confirm this idea.

Overall, one cannot achieve religious *taqwá* by deviation, disagreement, pursuing any path that opens up to the person, and entering any field that one comes across. Instead, one should adhere to the straight path which is free from conflict [between its travelers] and contradiction [between its parts]. This is how one may hope to acquire *taqwá*. For this reason, after saying, *and follow not (other) ways, for they will lead you away from His way*, God says: *this He enjoins you with that you may guard (against evil)* (tattaqūna, from taqwá) (6:153).

Rūḥ al-maʿānī says:

> The first verse ends with *that you may apply reason* (6:151) while the second verse ends with *that you may be mindful* (6:152). This is because the audience used to persist in the acts mentioned in the first verse—polytheism, killing their children, committing adultery, and murdering innocent souls without just cause—shamelessly and ignorant of their vileness. That is why God forbids them so that they may understand the evil of these acts, feel ashamed of committing them, and stop doing so. The acts mentioned in the second verse, on the other hand—preserving

> the property of the orphans for them, giving full measure, being just in speech, and fulfilling their covenants—are things that they used to observe and were proud of maintaining. Thus God commands these acts so that they may be mindful in case they forget. This is what Quṭb al-Rāzī says.

As you certainly know, saying that the Arabs were committed to preserving the property of the orphans, giving full measure, and being just in speech is contrary to the historical records about the custom of the Arabs prior to Islam. Moreover, the above interpretation implies that *tadhakkur* (to be mindful) in the verse [6:152] is the same as *dhikr* (to remember), which is not the common meaning of *tadhakkur* as used in the Qur'an.[1]

Rūḥ al-maʿānī then continues:

> According to al-Imām [al-Rāzī] in *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, the five duties in the first verse are clear and evident commands. That is why one should be able to understand them by applying reason. The four duties in the second verse are rather hidden and intricate matters. That is why one needs to do *tadhakkur*, which means exerting effort and thinking in order to figure out the balanced approach that one should pursue in these subjects. This is the reason for the different ending of the verses.

This interpretation is similar to what we said above. The only problem is that the four items mentioned in the second verse are things that one can reach by the slightest bit of contemplation. Realizing the evil of these practices is not as hidden and intricate as he says. That is why he had to justify his interpretation [of *tadhakkur* as "exerting much thought and effort"] by saying that the goal is to figure out *the balanced way* in these interactions. This ruins the meaning of the verse, because of three reasons: (1) To have a consistent flow, the object of mindfulness—in *that you may be mindful* (6:152)—should be the very items mentioned in the verse [not the balanced approach in them]. (2) The idea of striking the right balance is only applicable to the first two orders: approaching the property of the orphans, and giving full measure and weight. (3) The verse already addresses this issue by saying: *We do not impose on any soul a duty*

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1 As the author interpreted above, *tadhakkur* means "referring to the proof and evidence of something, and calling to mind its benefits or harms." It is not simply "remembrance" as opposed to forgetfulness. (Trans.)

except to the extent of its ability (6:152).[1] The reader should reflect on this.

Rūḥ al-maʿānī further adds under the third verse:

> Abū Ḥayyān says: In the third verse, God enjoins following the straight path and prohibits following other ways. Since the straight path includes all religious duties, the verse ends by referring to *taqwá*, which means guarding oneself against the Fire. If one follows His path, he will achieve everlasting salvation and eternal bliss.

The above interpretation implies that the main and primary theme of the verse is the command to follow the straight path. However, as we explained above, the verse's flow suggests that this command is only a prelude that prepares the ground for the subsequent prohibition: *and follow not (other) ways, for they will lead you away from His way* (6:153).

ثُمَّ آتَيْنا مُوسَى الْكِتابَ تَماماً عَلَى الَّذِي أَحْسَنَ وَ تَفْصِيلاً لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَ هُدىً وَ رَحْمَةً لَعَلَّهُمْ بِلِقاءِ رَبِّهِمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٥٤﴾

(6:154) ***Then We gave the Book to Moses complete for him who would do good, and as an elaboration of all things and a guidance and a mercy, so that they should believe in the meeting of their Lord.***

The above verses enjoined a set of general principles and universal commandments that: (1) were legislated universally in the religion of all prophets; and (2) were mentioned in brief and general terms. That is why this verse shifts to saying that these concise rulings which were legislated for all nations were then differentiated and elaborated whenever it was needed: *Then We gave the Book to Moses complete for him who would do good, and as an elaboration of all things.* This verse refers to one case of elaboration which happened through the Book that was revealed to Moses, and the next verse talks about another elaboration for the Prophet through the blessed Book that was revealed to him.

The verse means: "After legislating the general religious laws mentioned above, We gave a complete Book to Moses: (1) to cover the lacks and deficiencies of those who did good with regards to the concise legislations; (2) as an elaboration that differentiates all specific rules that branch out from the above concise commandments, as needed by the Children

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1 Therefore, if the ending of the verse meant "having a balanced approach," it would be repetitive and redundant. (Trans.)

of Israel; and (3) as a guidance and mercy so that they may believe in the meeting of their Lord." This is how we can interpret this verse in its context, in a way that it connects to the previous three verses.

***Then* (thumma) *We gave the Book to Moses…*:** This verse continues the thread of verses before: *Say: Come I will recite what your Lord has forbidden to you* (6:151). The speaker here is God in the first person plural,[1] addressed to the Prophet. The word "then" (*thumma*)—which implies a temporal delay and sequence—indicates that the Book revealed to Moses was given to him to complement and elaborate the concise and general commandments that were universally decreed before.

Some exegetes have suggested strange interpretations for *then We gave the Book to Moses*. For example:

(1) This statement involves an omission. The implied meaning is: "*Then* say, O Muḥammad, that *We gave the Book to Moses*."

(2) There is an omission and the implied meaning is: "*Then* I shall also recite for you: *We gave the Book to Moses*."

(3) There is an omission and the implied meaning is: "Then I shall also inform you that Moses was given the Book."

(4) It connects back to the story of Abraham, where it says: *And We gave to him Isaac and Jacob* (6:84). The meaning is: "And We gave to him Isaac and Jacob, then We gave the Book to Moses."

What has made them come up with these suggestions is that the Torah was revealed before the Qur'an, while the verse uses the word "then" (*thumma*) which suggests temporal delay. The implication of using this word after the verses above—*Say: Come I will recite what your Lord has forbidden to you…* (6:151-153)—is that the Torah was revealed *after* the Qur'an. However, our exposition above should clarify that there is no need for these contrived interpretations.[2]

***… complete for him who would do good…*:** The word "complete" shows that there was some deficiency in the Israelites who had done a good job with respect to the above general and universal commandments [in verses 6:151-153]. Thus the Book was revealed to Moses to complete

1 The pronoun "We" here is a majestic plural, also called the royal "we." (Trans.)

2 The above exegetes have assumed that the word "recite" in verse 6:151 indicates recitation of the Qur'an. The author's point is that what follows in verses 6:151-153 are universal religious teachings that existed before the Qur'an. (Trans.)

their deficiency. Elsewhere, after mentioning the revelation of the Book to Moses, God says: *And We ordained for him in the tablets admonition of every kind and clear explanation of all things; so take hold of them with firmness and enjoin your people to take hold of what is best thereof* (7:145). He also says: *And enter the gate making obeisance, and say, forgiveness. We will forgive you your wrongs and give more to those who do good (to others)* (2:58). Given these verses, *him who would do good* is a generic description indicating anyone who is a good-doer.[1]

Here are some other interpretations suggested by the exegetes:

(1) It means: "To complete Our good to Moses by honoring him with prophethood."

(2) It means: "To complete Our blessing upon the believers who do good."

(3) It means: "To complete Our blessing upon the good-doers, referring to the prophets."

(4) It means: "To complete Moses' rank and honor in paradise for his goodness in this world."

(5) It means: "To complete and complement God's honoring of Moses through prophethood and other blessings."[2]

(6) It connects to the story of Abraham. It means: "To complete Our blessings upon Abraham."

All of these are clearly weak interpretations.

***… and as an elaboration of all things…*:** "All things" includes anything that is necessary or beneficial for the Children of Israel, or can be beneficial for others who come after them.

***… and a guidance and a mercy…*:** This means guidance by which they may find their way, and a mercy by which they may be blessed.

***… so that they should believe in the meeting of their Lord*:** This suggests that the Children of Israel were reluctant—or even refused—to believe in the meeting of their Lord, meaning the Last Day. This can be confirmed by the fact that there is no mention of the Day of Resurrection

1 In other words, *him who would do good* does not refer to any specific individual or story, but it means "*anyone* who would do good." (Trans.)

2 Apparently the difference between this view and the first one is that in the first case, choosing Moses as a prophet was the completion of God's good to him, but here that is an initial good which is to be complemented by further blessings. (Trans.)

in the Torah as it is today—which the Qur'an describes as being distorted. According to some historians, certain tribes of Israel did not believe in the hereafter.

وَ هذا كِتابٌ أَنْزَلْناهُ مُبارَكٌ فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَ اتَّقُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ﴿١٥٥﴾

(6:155) ***And this is a Book We have revealed, blessed; therefore follow it and guard (against evil) that mercy may be shown to you.***

That is: This is a blessed Book that has the same special qualities that We mentioned above about the Book of Moses. *Therefore, follow it….*

أَنْ تَقُولُوا إِنَّما أُنْزِلَ الْكِتابُ عَلى طائِفَتَيْنِ مِنْ قَبْلِنا وَ إِنْ كُنَّا عَنْ دِراسَتِهِمْ لَغافِلِينَ ﴿١٥٦﴾

(6:156) ***Lest you say that the Book was only revealed to two parties before us and we were truly unaware of their study.***

The particle *an* (lit. "that") at the beginning of this verse means "lest that you say" or "that you may not say." Such usage of this particle is common in Arabic. It refers back to *We have revealed* in the last verse.

… two parties before us…: This refers to the Jews and Christians, who received the Torah and the Gospel (Injīl). The Qur'an also talks about the books of other prophets before them, such as Noah and Abraham. However, these books did not comprise an *elaborate and detailed* system of religious law, although they included the principles. As with the other books given to some other prophets, such as the Psalms (Zabūr) of David, they did not comprise any legal code altogether [which is the subject of discussion here], and/or the audience of the Qur'an at the time of revelation was unaware of these books.

The meaning is: "We revealed the Qur'an because We do not want you to say, 'A divine scripture with an elaborate legal code was only revealed to the two parties of Jews and Christians before us. Even with respect to these books, we were rather unaware of their study and reading. Thus we cannot be blamed because we were unaware.'"

أَوْ تَقُولُوا لَوْ أَنَّا أُنْزِلَ عَلَيْنَا الْكِتابُ لَكُنَّا أَهْدى مِنْهُمْ فَقَدْ جاءَكُمْ بَيِّنَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَ هُدىً وَ رَحْمَةٌ فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ كَذَّبَ بِآياتِ اللَّهِ وَ صَدَفَ عَنْها سَنَجْزِي الَّذِينَ يَصْدِفُونَ عَنْ آياتِنا سُوءَ الْعَذابِ بِما كانُوا يَصْدِفُونَ ﴿١٥٧﴾

(6:157) ***Or lest you should say: If the Book had been revealed to us, we would certainly have been better guided than they, so indeed there has come to you clear proof from your Lord, and guidance and mercy. Who then is more unjust than he who rejects Allah's communications and turns away from them? We will reward those who turn away*** **(yaṣdifūna, from ṣadaf)** ***from Our communications with an evil chastisement because they turned away*** **(yaṣdifūna, from ṣadaf).**

The pronoun "they" in *better guided than they* refers to the group mentioned in the last verse: "those before us, to whom the Book was revealed." *Ṣadaf* means *iʿrāḍ* (to turn away, to avert, to evade).

… so indeed **(fa-qad)** ***there has come to you clear proof*** **(bayyinah)** ***from your Lord…*****:** The particle *fāʾ* (so, then, thus) shows that this sentence is consequential to both *Lest you say* (6:156) and *Or lest you should say* (6:157). Here *bayyinah* (clear proof, evidence) is used interchangeably for *the Book* in order to indicate the clear proofs and manifest guidelines of this Book [that is, the Qur'an]. Hence, no one can have any excuse or justification for their shortcoming and noncompliance because this Book has such clear proofs and evidence. The meaning of the verse should be clear.

Examining Narrations

(1) Abū Baṣīr says: Once I was sitting next to Imam al-Bāqir while he was leaning on his mattress. He recited the *muḥkamāt* (decisive, solid, clear) verses in [Sūrah] al-Anʿām which have not been abrogated by anything. He said, "These [verse] were accompanied by seventy thousand angels: *Say: Come I will recite what your Lord has forbidden to you—that you do not associate anything with Him* (6:151)."[1]

(2) The Messenger of God said [to his Companions]: "Who among you would pledge allegiance to me to observe these three verses?" Then he recited: *Say: Come I will recite what your Lord has forbidden to you…* (6:151-153). Then he added, "Whoever abides by these, his reward will be with God. If one falls short of any part of them and God catches him [with His chastisement] in this world, then that shall be his punishment. And if He defers him to the hereafter, then his case will be up to God: He may hold him

1 *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*.

accountable if He wills, and He may pardon him if He wills."[1]

Author's comment: There are two problems with this narration: (1) One of the items mentioned in these verses is *shirk* (polytheism, associating partners with God). According to the explicit text of the Qur'an, *shirk* is not pardonable in the hereafter, and no worldly punishment is sufficient for it. God says: *Surely Allah does not forgive that anything should be associated with Him, and forgives what is besides that to whomsoever He wills* (4:48, 4:116) and: *Surely those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers, these it is on whom is the curse of Allah and the angels and men all. Abiding in it; their chastisement shall not be lightened nor shall they be given respite* (2:161-162). (2) This narration apparently suggests that these commandments are exclusively Islamic laws. The same notion can be inferred from other narrations from some of the Companions and their Followers (*tābiʿīn*), such as the following narration.

(3) Ibn Masʿūd said: Whoever would like to see the advice [or a testament] of Muḥammad with his seal [of approval], should recite these verses: *Say: Come I will recite what your Lord has forbidden to you… that you may guard (against evil)* (6:151-153).[2]

(4) Concerning *indecencies, those which are apparent and those which are concealed* (6:151) ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn said: *Those which are apparent* would be marrying one's stepmother, *and those which are concealed* would be adultery.

Author's comment: This narration should be interpreted as giving some of the examples and instances of the verse.

(5) Ibn Masʿūd said: Once the Messenger of God drew a line on the ground with his hand and said, "This is God's way." Then he drew other lines branching off from it to the right and the left, and said, "As with these ways, at every one of them there is a devil calling to it." Then he recited: *And (know) that this is my path, the straight one therefore follow it, and follow not (other) ways, for they will*

1 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of ʿAbd b. Ḥamīd, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Abū al-Shaykh, Ibn Mardawayh and al-Ḥākim (who has authenticated it), on the authority of ʿUbādat b. al-Ṣāmit.

2 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of a group of scholars of hadith. A similar account is narrated [in *Al-Durr al-manthūr*] on the authority Mundhir al-Thawrī, from al-Rabīʿ b. Khuthaym.

lead you away from His way (6:153).[1]

(6) Jābir b. ᶜAbd-Allāh said: Once we were sitting with the Prophet, when he drew a line in front of him—like this—and said, "This is the path of God." He drew two lines to the right of it and two lines to the left of it, and said, "These are the ways of Satan." Then he placed his hand on the way in the middle and recited: *And (know) that this is my path, the straight one therefore follow it…* (6:153).[2]

(7) Concerning *And (know) that this is my path, the straight one therefore follow it, and follow not (other) ways* (al-subul), *for they will lead you away from His way* (sabīlihi) (6:153) Imam al-Bāqir said: We are "the way" (*al-sabīl*) [that is, the way of God, and/or the only way]. Whoever rejects [us], that would be "the other ways" (*al-subul*). Such a person has indeed disbelieved.[3]

Author's comment: This is an example of matching and applying the verse to a different context (*jary*). What the Imam said can be deduced from putting the following two verses together: *Say: I do not ask of you any reward for it but love for my near relatives* (42:23) and: *Say: I do not ask you aught in return for it except for him who wishes to take a way to his Lord* (25:57). There are also many narrations, reported through both Shia and Sunni chains of transmission, saying that ᶜAlī is the straight path (*al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*). We discussed them in our exposition of Sūrah al-Fātiḥah [under verse 1:6] in the first volume of this book.[4]

1 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of Aḥmad, ᶜAbd b. Ḥamīd, al-Nasāʾī, al-Bazzāz, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Abū al-Shaykh, Ibn Mardawayh and al-Ḥākim (who has authenticated it).

2 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of Aḥmad, Ibn Mājah, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Ibn Mardawayh.

3 *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, on the authority of al-Ḥasan b. ᶜAlī, on the authority of his father, on the authority of al-Ḥusayn b. Saᶜīd, on the authority of Muḥammad b. Sinān, on the authority of Abū Khālid al-Qammāṭ.

4 See volume 1 of the English translation, pp. 81-83. (Trans.)

Chapter 6

Verses 158-160

هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلاَّ أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمُ الْمَلائِكَةُ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ رَبُّكَ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ بَعْضُ آياتِ رَبِّكَ يَوْمَ يَأْتِي بَعْضُ آياتِ رَبِّكَ لا يَنْفَعُ نَفْساً إِيمانُها لَمْ تَكُنْ آمَنَتْ مِنْ قَبْلُ أَوْ كَسَبَتْ فِي إِيمانِها خَيْراً قُلِ انْتَظِرُوا إِنَّا مُنْتَظِرُونَ ﴿١٥٨﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا دِينَهُمْ وَ كانُوا شِيَعاً لَسْتَ مِنْهُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ إِنَّما أَمْرُهُمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِما كانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿١٥٩﴾ مَنْ جاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ عَشْرُ أَمْثالِها وَ مَنْ جاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلا يُجْزى إِلاَّ مِثْلَها وَ هُمْ لا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿١٦٠﴾

(6:158) *Do they await anything but that the angels should come to them, or that your Lord should come, or that some of the signs of your Lord should come? On the day when some of the signs of your Lord shall come, its belief shall not profit a soul which did not believe before, or earn good through its belief. Say: Wait; we too are waiting.*

(6:159) *Surely they who divided their religion into parts and became sects. You have nothing to do with them; their affair is only with Allah, then He will inform them of what they used to do.*

(6:160) *Whoever brings a good deed, he shall have ten like it, and whoever brings an evil deed, he shall be recompensed only with the like of it, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly.*

Commentary

These verses are connected to the previous thread of discussion. The verses (1) threaten the polytheists who refuse to follow the straight path and diverge into factions; (2) exonerate the Prophet from those who deviate in their religion; (3) promise good to those who bring good deeds with themselves [on the Day of Judgment]; and (4) confirm the fulfilment of God's retribution [on the Day of Judgment].

هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلاَّ أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمُ الْمَلائِكَةُ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ رَبُّكَ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ بَعْضُ آياتِ رَبِّكَ يَوْمَ

يَأْتِي بَعْضُ آياتِ رَبِّكَ لا يَنْفَعُ نَفْساً إِيمانُها لَمْ تَكُنْ آمَنَتْ مِنْ قَبْلُ أَوْ كَسَبَتْ فِي إِيمانِها خَيْراً قُلِ انْتَظِرُوا إِنَّا مُنْتَظِرُونَ ﴿١٥٨﴾

(6:158) ***Do they await anything but that the angels should come to them, or that your Lord should come, or that some of the signs of your Lord should come? On the day when some of the signs of your Lord shall come, its belief shall not profit a soul which did not believe before, or earn good through its belief. Say: Wait; we too are waiting.***

This is a rhetorical question that implies a negation. It is stated in a context where admonition has proven ineffective and the religious call has failed. The events mentioned in this verse are things that will inevitably be accompanied by God's just judgment and decisive ruling that they shall be exterminated and the earth shall be cleared from their impurity.

***… that the angels should come to them…*:** Given the theme and context of the verse, what is meant here is the angels descending with punishment. The same meaning can be inferred from: *And they say: O you to whom the Reminder has been revealed! You are most surely insane. Why do you not bring to us the angels if you are of the truthful ones? We do not send the angels but with truth, and then they would not be respited* (15:6-8).

***… or that your Lord should come…*:** The "coming" of God means His *liqā'* (meeting, vision), which itself means a total unveiling of His absolute oneness, without any veil or obscurity. This is a special quality of the Day of Resurrection, when the veils will be lifted. It is called a "coming" (*ityān*) because of the aspect of appearance after hiddenness, and presence after absence.[1] Otherwise, the Holy Precinct of God is far superior to physical properties.

Some exegetes have said that *your Lord should come* means "your Lord's *command* should come." We discussed this interpretation under the verse: *They do not wait aught but that Allah should come to them in the shadows of the clouds* (2:210).[2]

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1 In other words, when something or someone comes to a person, it becomes present and manifest after being absent and hidden from the person. It is in this sense that the appearance of God's reality and presence on the Day of Resurrection is called *your Lord should come*. (Trans.)

2 See volume 3 of the English translation, pp. 135ff. The suggested view can be confirmed by verse 16:33. (Trans.)

***… or that some of the signs of your Lord should come…*:** This means the occurrence of some event that would change their living condition in a way that they can no longer exercise choice and free will. Three examples of such signs and events are:

(1) Death, which takes one from the realm of action to the realm of retribution in *barzakh* (the intermediate realm between this life and the Resurrection).

(2) The establishment of disbelief and the strengthening of defiance in their souls as second nature, such that they can no longer acknowledge monotheism and embrace the truth wholeheartedly. They can at most admit it only verbally, out of fear of punishment and vengeance. This can possibly be inferred from the verse: *And when the word shall come to pass against them, We shall bring forth for them a creature from the earth that shall speak unto them that indeed people would not believe in Our signs* (27:82). Similarly He says: *And they say: When will this judgment* (al-fatḥ) *take place, If you are truthful? Say: On the Day of Judgment the faith of those who (now) disbelieve will not profit them, nor will they be respited* (32:28-29). Apparently *fatḥ* (lit. "victory, triumph, opening") here means the Prophet's triumph by God's just judgment between him and his people. The same meaning can be seen in what God narrates from Prophet Shuʿayb: *Our Lord! Judge* (iftaḥ, from fatḥ) *between us and our people with truth; and Thou art the best of deciders* (7:89). And He relates concerning His messengers: *And they asked for judgment* (istaftaḥū, from fatḥ) *and every insolent tyrant was disappointed* (14:15).

(3) The occurrence of some punishment from God that one can neither prevent nor escape. This would force them to believe in order to protect themselves from the imminent excruciating punishment. However, such belief cannot save them because belief is beneficial only if one freely chooses it out of his own volition. This can be inferred from these verse: *Then, when they saw Our punishment, they said: We believe in Allah alone and we deny what we used to associate with Him. But their belief was not going to profit them when they had seen Our punishment; (this is) Allah's law, which has indeed obtained in the matter of His servants, and there the disbelievers are lost* (40:84-85).

These three things—*that the angels should come to them, or that your Lord should come, or that some of the signs of your Lord should come*—are events that come with a just and conclusive judgment between them. Since

the obstinate disbelievers do not benefit from any admonition, and since no argument is effective in them, they are effectively just waiting for such a final judgment. They may not be conscious of its coming, but that does not change the reality that is facing them, whether they know it or not.

Some exegetes have said: The rhetorical question in this verse implies derision and mockery. The polytheists used to challenge the Prophet to make them see their Lord, to make the angels descend upon them, or to bring a sign for them like what the ancient prophets brought.[1] Hence it is as though the verse is saying: "They are not really after a proof, but they only want the events that they demanded."

This can be a possible interpretation for the first half of the verse. However, it does not quite match the second half of the verse: *On the day when some of the signs of your Lord shall come….* Moving on to explain the facts and expound on the events does not comply with a context of derision and mockery.

***… On the day when some of the signs of your Lord shall come, its belief shall not profit a soul which did not believe before, or earn good through its belief. Say: Wait; we too are waiting*:** Here the verse explains the quality of the day when the above events shall occur—which is in fact the quality of these very signs. Believing at that point will not benefit anyone who did not believe willingly and voluntarily prior to that. It shall also be of no avail if one was a believer before but did not earn good through his belief—meaning that he did not do righteous deeds, but plunged into sin and disobedience. Such a person cannot repent at that point. God says: *And repentance is not for those who go on doing evil deeds, until when death comes to one of them, he says: Surely now I repent* (4:18).

Therefore, this verse applies to two kinds of people: (1) those who did not believe out of willingness and satisfaction before that day; and (2) those who believed in God but not in His communications. The latter are those who had no regard for any of God's laws, who freely indulged in sins, and who did not earn any righteous deeds in their state of belief. Once these groups behold God's punishment, if they desperately resort to *īmān* (belief, faith) in order to avert the punishment from themselves, that will not profit them; *and His punishment cannot be averted from the guilty* [6:147].

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1 See verses 15:7, 17:92, 21:5 and 25:21. (Trans.)

The verse repeats "your Lord" three times—a graceful expression that gives it an elegant rhythm. This expression is meant to support the Prophet against his opponents: the polytheists. They used to boast about their lords and pride themselves about their idols. In response, the verse comforts the Prophet by his Lord, as a means of strengthening his heart and pacifying his soul. He will either triumph in his mission, or his Lord will judge decisively between him and his opponents.

***… Say: Wait; we too are waiting*:** This stresses the previous sense of consoling the Prophet. It means: "You wait for what they are awaiting; tell them that you are waiting for it; and tell them to also anticipate it, because it is a serious promise, not something frivolous."

Therefore, this verse genuinely threatens the Prophet's opponents with a punishment that could really occur. It is not merely a superficial threat that is not really meant. As we said, some exegetes have said that the rhetorical question in this verse implies derision and mockery [in response to their defiant request of certain events as miracle]. One exegete has responded to this view by saying:

The three events mentioned here are things that they [the polytheists] are actually facing; it is only a matter of time before their occurrence. Therefore, *some of the signs of your Lord* cannot mean any of their requested miracles, because it is God's perennial custom that if He grants the requested signs of any nation but they still do not believe, then He will eradicate them by exterminating punishment. However, God would never exterminate the nation of the Prophet of Mercy. Because of this mercy, He would never grant their defiant requests.

The problem with this view is that the Prophet's nation is also subject to the just judgment and decisive decision of God. The verses of the Qur'an are more than explicit about this, such as: *And every nation had a messenger; so when their messenger came, the matter was decided between them with justice, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly. And they say: When will this threat come about, if you are truthful? Say: I do not control for myself any harm, or any benefit except what Allah wills; every nation has a term… And they ask you: Is that true? Say: Aye! By my Lord! It is most surely the truth, and you will not escape* (10:47-53).

Based this verse, some have argued that mere *īmān* (belief, faith) is not beneficial for a person, unless it is accompanied by good deeds. This is true overall, but not unconditionally. The verse is specifically about two

conditions: (1) the condition of one who has the opportunity to believe in God but does not; and (2) the condition of one who has the opportunity to believe and to do righteous deeds, but only believes without doing any righteous deeds. If they do not believe or do righteous deeds *despite having the chance*, then believing desperately at the time of facing God's severe punishment will not avail them. This is not applicable to one who believes willingly but dies right away and does not get the chance to do righteous deeds or earn good through belief. On the contrary, it can be inferred from the verse implicitly—or even explicitly—that what shall profit a person is voluntary belief that is not ruined by sin or contaminated by evil.[1]

***… its belief* (īmānuhā) *shall not profit a soul which did not believe before, or earn good through its belief* (īmānihā)…:** In the Arabic text of the verse, the word *īmānuhā* (its belief) has been interjected between *nafsan* (a soul) and its quality of *which did not believe before, or earn good through its belief*, which is not a natural order of expression. This is because of two considerations: (1) It prevents a long separation from the subject of the sentence—"its belief" (*īmānuhā*)—and its verb [which is *shall not profit*]. (2) It prevents the consecutive mention of "its belief" (*īmānuhā* and *īmānihā*).[2]

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا دِينَهُمْ وَ كانُوا شِيَعاً لَسْتَ مِنْهُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ إِنَّما أَمْرُهُمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِما كانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿١٥٩﴾

(6:159) ***Surely they who divided their religion into parts and became sects. You have nothing to do with them; their affair is only with Allah, then He will inform them of what they used to do.***

The previous verses were about the polytheists who divided their pure religion. This implies that *they who divided their religion into parts and became sects* are also the polytheists. Meanwhile, the previous verses are

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1 Therefore, the belief of one who dies right after believing will be beneficial to him, because he died with a pure belief, uncontaminated by sin. This means that "doing good" is not a *condition* for the effectiveness of faith, but "doing evil" is an *impediment* for it. (Trans.)

2 The natural order, rendered into English, would be: "A soul which did not believe before, or earn good through its belief, its belief shall not profit." As one can see, this is less fluent than the current translation of the verse, which corresponds to deviating from the natural order. (Trans.)

also applicable to the People of the Book partially, and perhaps they even involve some allusion to them.[1] Hence, the group mentioned here includes not only the polytheists, but also the Jews and the Christians because of their common quality of dividing and disagreeing in God's religion.

This verse apparently follows the previous verses that explained God's universal commandments, starting with prohibition of polytheism and ending with prohibition of deviating from His way [6:151-153]. Given this connection, the current verse is an application of the above theme, where it sets the Prophet apart from *they who divided their religion into parts and became sects*. Therefore, the use of past tense here —in *divided their religion*—is not meant to *limit* the meaning to some event in the past, but it only indicates the *occurrence* of this quality, whether in the past, the present or the future.

Here the Prophet is separated from those who deviated in religion and divided into sects, where each sect follows a different leader. The Prophet is apart and distinct from them because he is a Messenger who calls to the word of truth and the religion of monotheism. He is a perfect example that represents Islam by his very existence, and invites others to it through his practice. Therefore, saying that *you have nothing to do with them* is tantamount to saying: "They are not following the religion that you propagate, and are not on the same path that you pursue."

The meaning is: "Those who divided their religion through disagreement and disintegration into sects are not on your path which is founded on unity, solidarity and avoidance of division. Their division in religion was despite having knowledge, *only out of transgression amongst themselves* [2:213]. Their affair with regards to this division is solely up to their Lord. You shall not be touched by any of that. On the Day of Resurrection God will inform them of what they used to do, its reality will be unveiled to them, and they will be held hostage to it."

Given the above, it should be clear that there is no evidence to restrict the verse's meaning to any particular group, such as: (1) the polytheists; (2) the Jews and the Christians; and (3) the followers of denominations and sects in this nation [of Islam]. Rather, the verse's message is universal: it exonerates the Prophet from all of these groups.

مَنْ جاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ عَشْرُ أَمْثالِها وَ مَنْ جاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلا يُجْزى إِلاَّ مِثْلَها وَ

1 This is based on verses 6:154-157. (Trans.)

هُمْ لا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿١٦٠﴾

(6:160) ***Whoever brings a good deed, he shall have ten like it, and whoever brings an evil deed, he shall be recompensed only with the like of it, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly.***

This verse has a complete meaning on its own. It talks about God's favor and grace upon His servants, where He rewards good deeds tenfold, but does not recompense evil deeds more than their equivalent. In other words, each good deeds counts for ten, while each evil deed counts for one. God does not wrong anyone in retribution, meaning that He does not pay a lesser reward for good deeds than ten times, and does not mete out a greater punishment for evil deeds than their size. If the conditions allow, He may reward good deeds by more than ten times, as mentioned in the verse: *The parable of those who spend their property in the way of Allah is as the parable of a grain growing seven ears (with) a hundred grains in every ear; and Allah multiplies for whom He will* (2:261). Similarly, given the circumstances, it is possible that He may pardon evil deeds and not count them even as one.

Meanwhile, this verse is connected to the previous verses, has appeared in the same context, and follows their thread. The last verse was about being united and gathered around the truth, versus being divergent and deviating with regards to it. Hence, it is as if this verse refers to these two qualities as good deeds and evil deeds, respectively, where each shall be rewarded accordingly, without any injustice. It says that one's reward will match one's action. If one brings a good deed, then he will receive the like of it and more. If one brings an evil deed—in this case the deviation that is prohibited—then he will not be recompensed more than the like of it. Such a person should cut his hopes from receiving anything good in reward [for his evil deed of digression from the truth]. Therefore, the main message of the verse is the same as: *And the recompense of evil is punishment like it* (42:40). This means that the verse is not primarily about the *size, extent or quantity* of retribution, but about its *type, nature and quality*. It does not mean to say that evil deeds will receive *only one* punishment and *not more*, but it means to say that the consequence of an evil deed will be *evil* alike, *nothing desirable*.

Examining Narrations

(1) Concerning *on the day when some of the signs of your Lord shall*

come, its belief shall not profit a soul which did not believe before (6:158), it is narrated from Imams al-Bāqir and al-Ṣādiq: [The signs are:] (1) the sun rising from the west; (2) the coming of the creature; and (3) the smoke [in the sky]. If these signs occur while one has been insistently sinning and has not acted according to belief, then his belief at that point will not profit him.[1]

Author's comment: Insistently sinning is an interpretation of *or earn good through its belief*, as we discussed above. The next narration also confirms this.

(2) Concerning *or earn good through its belief* (6:158), it is narrated from either Imams al-Bāqir or al-Ṣādiq: This refers to a disobedient believer whose many sins and few good deeds veiled him from [benefiting from] his belief. Thus he did not earn any good through his belief.[2]

(3) Concerning *on the day when some of the signs of your Lord shall come* (6:158) Imam al-Bāqir said: When the sun rises from its setting point, anyone who believes on that day, his belief will not profit him.[3]

(4) Concerning *on the day when some of the signs of your Lord shall come* (6:158) the Prophet said: [It means] the rising of the sun from its setting point.[4]

Author's comment: Apparently this narration provides one particular application of the verse. It could also be an interpretation of the verse's meaning [in general]. Either way, it refers to a day when God's wrath will manifest in a way that will force people to believe, but their belief will not avail them. The rise of the sun from its setting point has been mentioned in very many narrations, reported through Shia chains of transmission from the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt, and also through Sunni chains from

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1 *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, on the authority of Zurārah, Ḥumrān and Muḥammad b. Muslim.

2 *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, on the authority of Abū Baṣīr.

3 *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, on the authority of his father, on the authority of Ṣafwān, on the authority of Ibn Muskān.

4 *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, on the authority of Aḥmad, ʿAbd b. Ḥamīd's *Musnad*, al-Tirmidhī, Abū Yaʿlá, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Abū al-Shaykh and Ibn Mardawayh, on the authority of Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī.

many Companions including: Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī, Ibn Masʿūd, Abū Hurayrah, ʿAbd-Allāh b. ʿUmar, Ḥudhayfah, Abū Dharr, ʿAbd-Allāh b. ʿAbbās, ʿAbd-Allāh b. Abī Awfá, Ṣafwān b. ʿAssāl, Anas, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAwf, Muʿāwiyah, Abū Umāmah, ʿĀʾishah and others. However, the content of these narrations varies a lot.

From the point of view of modern scientific theories, there is nothing inherently impossible with a reversal of the earth's current rotation toward the east. It is also possible that the north and south poles may swap their positions either gradually, as astronomical observations have detected, or suddenly due to a universal cosmic event. These possibilities would be relevant assuming that the expression [about the sun rising from its setting point] is meant literally, as opposed to being a symbolic allusion to a secret reality.

Other signs mentioned in the narrations are: (1) the coming of the creature from the earth (*dābbat al-ardh*); (2) the smoke (*al-dukhān*); and (3) the coming of Gog and Magog. These are events that are mentioned in the Noble Qur'an.[1] There are also other signs that are found in the narrations [but not in the Qur'an], such as: (1) the coming of the Mahdi; (2) the decent of Jesus son of Mary; and (3) the rise of al-Dajjāl. These are events that will occur at the end of time, but it is not clear if they will close the gate of repentance.

(5) Imam al-Ṣādiq said: As long as the earth exists, God shall have a proof (*ḥujjah*) on it who knows what is lawful and what is unlawful, and who calls [the people] to the way of God. God's proof shall not be cut off from the earth except for forty days before the Day of Resurrection. When the proof is lifted, then the gate of repentance shall be locked, and "its belief shall not profit a soul which did not believe before the proof was lifted." Those are the worst of God's creatures, and they are the ones upon whom the Resurrection shall befall.[2]

(6) Concerning *Surely they who divided* (farraqū) *their religion into parts and became sects* (6:159) Imam al-Ṣādiq said: By God these

1 See 27:82, 44:10 and 21:96. (Trans.)

2 *Tafsīr al-burhān*, on the authority of al-Barqī, via his chain of narration, on the authority of ʿAbd-Allāh b. Sulaymān al-ʿĀmirī. This has also been narrated from Imam al-Ṣādiq through another chain of transmission by Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī in *Manāqib-i Fāṭimah*.

people[1] deserted (*fāraqū*) their religion.[2]

Author's comment: That is, "they deserted their religion by diverging into denominations." We also have already discussed the famous narration about the Muslim nation dividing into seventy-three sects.[3]

(7) Imam al-Ṣādiq said: [Imam] ᶜAlī used to recite this [verse] as "deserted their religion" (*fāraqū dīnahum*).[4]

Author's comment: This recitation is also narrated from him [Imam ᶜAlī] through some Sunni chains of transmission, as reported in *al-Durr al-manthūr* and other books.

(8) Zurārah says: Once I was with Imam al-Ṣādiq when someone asked him about the verse *whoever brings a good deed, he shall have ten like it* (6:160), saying: "Does this apply to those who do not acknowledge this matter [of your *wilāyah* (authority, guardianship)]?"

He replied, "This is exclusively for the believers [in our *wilāyah*]."

I asked, "May God be your aid! What if someone fasts, prays, abstains from sins, has good self-restraint, and neither acknowledges [you] nor insults [you]?"

He replied, "God will let such people enter paradise by His mercy."[5]

Author's comment: This narration suggests that one's reward [in the hereafter] will be according to one's knowledge (*maᶜrifah*). There are other narrations through both Shia and Sunni chains of transmission that convey this idea.

There are also many other narrations concerning this verse—*Whoever brings a good deed, he shall have ten like it…* (6:160)—reported by both Shia and Sunni sources as an *interpretation* of the verse. However, they, rather, present certain examples and applications such as fasting, prayer and so on. We shall not quote them here.

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1 That is, the general Muslim community. (Trans.)

2 *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, on the authority of his father, on the authority of al-Naḍr, on the authority of al-Ḥalabī, on the authority of Muᶜallá b. Khunays.

3 The author has discussed this narration under verse 3:103; volume 6 of the English translation, pp. 275ff. (Trans.)

4 *Tafsīr al-ᶜAyyāshī*, on the authority of Abū Baṣīr.

5 *Tafsīr al-burhān*, on the authority of al-Barqī, on the authority of his father, on the authority of al-Naḍr, on the authority of Yaḥyá al-Ḥalabī, on the authority of Ibn Muskān.

Verses 161-165

قُلْ إِنَّنِي هَدانِي رَبِّي إِلى صِراطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ دِيناً قِيَماً مِلَّةَ إِبْراهِيمَ حَنِيفاً وَ ما كانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٦١﴾ قُلْ إِنَّ صَلاتِي وَ نُسُكِي وَ مَحْيايَ وَ مَماتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعالَمِينَ ﴿١٦٢﴾ لا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَ بِذلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَ أَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴿١٦٣﴾ قُلْ أَ غَيْرَ اللَّهِ أَبْغِي رَبًّا وَ هُوَ رَبُّ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَ لا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ إِلاَّ عَلَيْها وَ لا تَزِرُ وازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرى ثُمَّ إِلى رَبِّكُمْ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِما كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿١٦٤﴾ وَ هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلائِفَ الْأَرْضِ وَ رَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجاتٍ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي ما آتاكُمْ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ سَرِيعُ الْعِقابِ وَ إِنَّهُ لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٦٥﴾

(6:161) *Say: Surely, (as for) me, my Lord has guided me to the straight path; (to) a most right religion, the faith of Abraham the upright one, and he was not of the polytheists.*

(6:162) *Say. Surely my prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are (all) for Allah, the Lord of the nations.*

(6:163) *No associate has He; and this am I commanded, and I am the first of those who submit.*

(6:164) *What! Shall I seek a Lord other than Allah, while He is the Lord of all things? And no soul earns (evil) but against itself, and no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another; then to your Lord is your return, so He will inform you of that in which you differed.*

(6:165) *And He it is Who has made you successors in the land and raised some of you above others in rank, that He might try you by what He has given you; surely your Lord is quick to requite (evil), and He is most surely the Forgiving, the Merciful.*

Commentary

These are the final verses of the chapter. They: (1) summarize the Prophet's objective in his mission as outlined in this chapter; (2) state

that he practices what he preaches; and (3) sum up the arguments in this chapter in refutation of polytheism.

قُلْ إِنَّنِي هَدانِي رَبِّي إِلى صِراطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ دِيناً قِيَماً مِلَّةَ إِبْراهِيمَ حَنِيفاً وَ ما كانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٦١﴾

(6:161) ***Say: Surely, (as for) me, my Lord has guided me to the straight path; (to) a most right* (qiyaman)** ***religion, the faith of Abraham the upright one* (ḥanīfan)*, and he was not of the polytheists.***

Qiyam is an abbreviation of *qiyām* (to stand, to support, to uphold). It is used as an adjective for religion to emphasize the extent to which the religion supports and upholds the welfare of the people.[1] It is also said that *qiyam* is an adjective, meaning *qayyim* (maintainer, upholder) of something.

Here God orders the Prophet to describe the Lord to Whom he invites as follows: He has guided him by His guidance to a straight path and a clear way. It is a path that is a maintainer (*qayyim*) of its travelers, in the sense that it is free from internal contradiction [between its parts] and external failure [in leading to its goal]. It is a religion that is an upholder (*qāʾim*) of the welfare of both this world and the hereafter in the best possible manner, because it is founded on the innate human nature (*fiṭrah*). It is the faith of Abraham who was upright (*ḥanīf*), meaning that he always inclined toward the level path of monotheism, and did not deviate to the sides through polytheism. *He was not of the polytheists*.

We explained the concepts mentioned in of this verse in our exposition of the previous verses of this chapter.[2]

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلاتِي وَ نُسُكِي وَ مَحْيايَ وَ مَماتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعالَمِينَ ﴿١٦٢﴾ لا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَ بِذلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَ أَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴿١٦٣﴾

(6:162-163) ***Say. Surely my prayer and my sacrifice* (nusukī)** ***and my life and my death are (all) for Allah, the Lord of the nations. No associate***

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1 A *maṣdar* (verbal noun, infinitive, gerund)—such as *qiyām*—is sometimes used instead of an adjective to show emphasis. (Trans.)

2 See the author's discussion under verse 6:79; volume 13 of the English translation, pp. 241ff. (Trans.)

has He; and this am I commanded, and I am the first of those who submit.

Nusuk means any "act of worship" but it is commonly used for the act of sacrifice—or the sacrificial animal—for the sake of God.

Here is a second command to the Prophet: He should tell the people that he acts according to God's guidance and adheres to it as he has been ordered. This absolves him from suspicion and accusation. It also makes it easier for the audience to accept his call, because one of the signs of truthfulness of one's message is that the person practices what he preaches, without any dichotomy between his speech and his action.

"Prayer" is mentioned explicitly and separately because of God's special care and attention to it. "Life" includes all aspects in one's life, including all of one's actions and qualities, and anything that one does or abstains from. "Death" includes any aspect that is related to it, which is effectively rooted in one's life, as per the [Prophetic] narration: "You shall die as you live."

God tells him to say: "Surely I have dedicated my prayer and all my worship[1] in its absolute sense, and my life and my death to God, the Lord of the nations. I do not associate anyone with Him in any of these things. I am a servant of God in all aspects of my life and death. I have turned my face toward Him, meaning that I neither take nor leave anything except for Him. I carry on with my life only for Him and want to die only in His way, for indeed He is the Lord of all nations: He is their Owner and He is the One Who directs their affairs. I have been commanded to this kind of servitude while I am the first submitter to God in complying with the perfect servitude which He wants in every aspect."

***… Surely my prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are (all) for Allah…*:** Given the above explanation, the qualification "for Allah" applies *in the same sense* to all of the four items mentioned here. It is not that the first two items [that is, *my prayer and my sacrifice*] are "for God" in the sense that he *does* them in sincere submission to Him, while the last two [that is, *my life and my death*] are "for God" in the sense that he *believes* them to be subject to His command. In other words, it is not that the first two inform the audience about the Prophet's sincerity in worship [as a practical quality], while the last two indicate his belief that God is

1 As the author said above, these verses summarize the chapter. Therefore, it could be that the choice of the word *nusuk* here involves some reference to the many verses above concerning sacrifice and slaughter. (Trans.)

the Owner of life and death [as something theoretical]. Such an interpretation is contrived. Instead, the entire statement is a declaration of the Prophet's sincere servitude in every aspect of worship, life and death, or his commitment to be sincere in all these aspects.

***… and I am the first of those who submit* (al-muslimīn):** "First" here means first in rank and degree. The Prophet had the highest degree of submission. Otherwise, there were other Muslims (lit. submitters) before him temporally. Some examples, as narrated by God, are:

Noah: *And I am commanded that I should be of those who submit* (10:72).

Abraham: *I submit myself to the Lord of the nations* (2:131).

Abraham and Ishmael: *And our Lord! Make us both submissive to Thee* (2:128).

Lot: *But We did not find therein save a (single) house of those who submitted* (51:36).

The Queen of Sheba: *And we were given the knowledge before it, and we were submissive* (27:42); *And I submit with Solomon to Allah, the Lord of the nations* (27:44). The first verse would be applicable assuming that she meant submission to God.

The expression "first submitter" is not found anywhere in the Qur'an except in the current verse, and also in Sūrah al-Zumar: *Say: I am commanded that I should serve Allah, being sincere to Him in obedience. And I am commanded that I shall be the first of those who submit* (39:11-12).

Some exegetes have said: What is meant here is "the first submitter *in this nation*"; otherwise, Abraham was the first submitter [in the absolute sense], and those who came after him were his followers in submission (Islam).

The problem with this view is that it assumes an unwarranted qualification. Moreover, the claim that Abraham was the first Muslim (submitter) is rejected by what we quoted above [namely verse 10:72 about Noah's submission]. There is neither any evidence for the above interpretation in the prayer narrated from Abraham and Ishmael—neither in the verse: *and (raise) from our offspring a nation submitting to Thee* (2:128), nor in the verse: *the faith of your father Ibrahim; He named you Muslims* (22:78).

قُلْ أَ غَيْرَ اللَّهِ أَبْغِي رَبًّا وَ هُوَ رَبُّ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَ لا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ إِلاَّ عَلَيْها
وَ لا تَزِرُ وازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرى ثُمَّ إِلى رَبِّكُمْ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِما كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ

تَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿١٦٤﴾

(6:164) ***Say: What! Shall I seek a Lord other than Allah, while He is the Lord of all things? And no soul earns (evil) but against itself, and no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another; then to your Lord is your return, so He will inform you of that in which you differed.***

This verse and the next one are comprised of three proofs that incorporate all of the arguments discussed in this chapter for monotheism. One proof is based on the beginning of creation; one proof is based on its end; and one proof is based on the state of humankind between the two. In other words, there are three arguments which relate to the realm of life in this world, the realm prior to it, and the realm after it.

The proof based on the origin is: *Shall I seek a Lord other than Allah, while He is the Lord of all things?* If God is the Lord of all things, then obviously all things would be His servants and subject to His Lordship. Hence, there is absolutely no lord besides Him that one could rightfully serve and worship.

The proof based on the return to God is implied by: *And no soul earns (evil) but against itself, and no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another; then to your Lord is your return, so He will inform you of that in which you differed.* It means: "Anything that any soul earns—meaning any act that one commits—will be loaded on the back of that person alone. No bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another person; thus nothing earned by one individual will be loaded on another person. Then the return will be to God, and it is up to Him to requite you by unveiling the realities of your acts." The implied argument is: Since He is the Owner of the Day of Judgment, and there is no escape from His retribution, it follows that He is the One to be served and worshiped, not others who do not control anything.

The proof based on life in this world is found in the next verse: *And He it is Who has made you successors in the land…* (6:165). The gist of the argument is: Your life in this world is governed by an amazing system that is based on your succession in the land and your diversity in terms of age, strength, gender, wealth, power, knowledge, and so on. Even though this is a conventional system, it is rooted in your state of existence and creation, which has been designed by God. He has created this system only for your trial and tribulation. Hence, He is the Lord Who is in charge

of your happiness. He helps those who obey Him advance toward the ordained felicity for them; and He leaves the wrongdoers there on their knees. Therefore, He is the only One Who is worthy of being served and worshiped.

***… And no soul earns (evil) but against itself, and no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another…*:** Given the above explanation, these two sentences complement one another and compose a single message: "Anything [of action and belief] that anyone acquires will adhere to him, but not anything else [acquired by others]." Thus, these two sentences are equivalent to the verse: *Every soul is hostage to what it earns* (74:38).

وَ هُوَ الَّذِی جَعَلَکُمْ خَلائِفَ الْأَرْضِ وَ رَفَعَ بَعْضَکُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجاتٍ لِیَبْلُوَکُمْ فِی ما آتاکُمْ إِنَّ رَبَّکَ سَرِیعُ الْعِقابِ وَ إِنَّهُ لَغَفُورٌ رَحِیمٌ ﴿١٦٥﴾

(6:165) ***And He it is Who has made you successors* (khalāʾif)** ***in the land and raised some of you above others in rank, that He might try you by what He has given you; surely your Lord is quick to requite (evil), and He is most surely the Forgiving, the Merciful.***

Khalāʾif is the plural of *khalīfah* (successor, vicegerent). It can have two meanings: (1) He makes some of you succeed others [generation by generation]; or (2) He has made you His vicegerents in the earth. We discussed the second sense of *khalīfah* in our exposition of the verse: *And when your Lord said to the angels, I am going to place in the earth a* khalīfah (2:30). The meaning of the verse should be clear given our explanation above [under the last verse]. The chapter ends with mentioning God's forgiveness and mercy.

Examining Narrations

(1) Concerning *ḥanīfan musliman* (lit. "an upright submitter," 3:67) Imam al-Ṣādiq said: [It means] pure, sincere, and completely free from the worship of idols.[1]

Author's comment: Another version of the hadith reads, "[It means] pure, sincere, and unmixed by anything."[2] Either way, this narration

1 *Al-Kāfī*, via its chain of narration, on the authority of Ibn Muskān.

2 *Tafsīr al-burhān*, on the authority of al-Barqī, via his chain of narration, on the authority of Ibn Muskān, from the Imam.

provides the intended message of these two terms, not their literal meaning.

(2) Imam al-Ṣādiq said: Do not say that there is a single level (or rank, *darajah*). Indeed God says: "Levels, some above others." People differ from one another according to their actions.[1]

Author's comment: This is a paraphrase of the verse. The verse says: *And raised some of you above others in rank* (6:165). Elsewhere God says: *And We have exalted some of them above others in rank* (43:32). Apparently "some above others" is part of the Imam's speech. The Imam must have said this to interpret not the current verse, but verses like: *They are (of varying) ranks with Allah* (3:163). It is reported under this verse as a mistake on the part of the narrator. The reason for this is that the Imam says, "People differ from one another according to their actions," which clearly does not match the current verse.

The end. All praise be to Almighty God.

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1 *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyashī*, on the authority of Abu Baṣīr.